

new music connoisseur

The magazine devoted to the contemporary music scene

IN ASSOCIATION WITH COMPOSERS CONCORDANCE, INC. ■ www.newmusicon.org ■ NEWSSTAND PRICE \$4.95

Immortalizing a witty and far-sighted musical figure



Nicolas Slonimsky may not be a household name, but his musical legacy is gaining more weight among today's crop of serious composers and performers. Largely through the efforts of his daughter, Electra Slonimsky Yourke, his unique voice has been "remastered" in four large volumes. Joseph Pehrson sat down with Electra to talk about these books and some of the events of his life. (See page 5).



The Society of Composers Inc. (SCI) held its annual meeting this past August in South Carolina. Greg Steinke keeps us informed on the latest doings of this venerable musical organization (pg. 8).

(Clockwise, starting at top left)
Slonimsky with his wife, writer-editor Dorothy Adlow, in 1931; with daughter Electra at age 6; at the piano with his notorious orange (and an unaccounted for lemon); Electra Slonimsky Yourke today. At right, the Thelema Trio from Belgium (with unidentified fourth musician) at the SCI annual meeting.



PLUS

■ An engaging review by Leonard Lehrman of a book by Jack Gottlieb. Oy vey, you'll wrack your noodle digesting those intervals! ■ A review by BLC of a rare product these days: a commercially released documentary film about classical musicians (No, we're not kidding) ■ Jimmy Paulk has much to say about a Greek classic turned into an opera by Mark Adamo ■ Melanie Mitrano respectfully reviews the work of fellow vocal talents singing songs of composers writing for them ■ A puzzle with a solution not to be read out loud in polite company ■ What they're saying about NMC ■ Our usual Bulletin Board with some unusual announcements

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NMC is a semi-annual periodical focusing on the work of the composers of our time, with additional coverage of rare and neglected classical music from all national and ethnic sources.

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Aaron Copland and Irving Fine, 1961.

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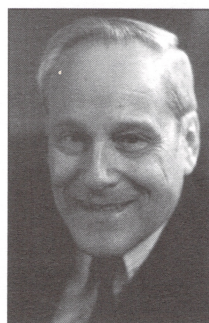
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IN THIS ISSUE:

On matters of immortality

During our 13 years of publishing *NMC* we've reported the loss of major figures in music. We've tried to honor them with obituaries and the occasional tribute of a close admirer. But we regret that we could not give more attention to their surviving loved ones, especially those who expressed uncommon devotion.

We find this sort of expression to be a sign of the human obsession with immortality. We first saw this in the efforts of Rosa Drake Julstrom to carry on an enterprise devoted to her husband Clifford Julstrom. More recently, Catherine Luening assumed the role of trustee for the papers of her late husband, Otto Luening, valued documents which will be bequeathed to the Academy of Arts and Letters upon her death. Cecile Bazelon continues to devote herself to the music and writings of her spouse, Irwin "Bud" Bazelon. And Pen Fei, the widow of Meyer Kupferman, has seen to it that his record company will survive in good hands. And so it goes; there are many such illuminating examples in the arts.

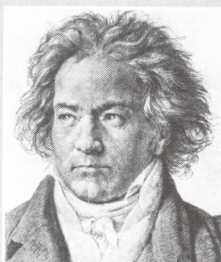
But why limit this observation to wives? Just as significant are those demonstrations of devotion shown by the offspring of creative figures who have perished. A wonderful thing has just occurred with the publication of four volumes of books compiled from the writings of Nicolas Slonimsky, a most unusual figure in the annals of 20th century music. This rich collection has been carefully



Nicolas Slonimsky on boat
to America

and authoritatively edited by his daughter, Electra Slonimsky Yourke, who has brought forth several of her father's previous books since his death in 1995.

For those of us who may not have been full-time scholars in the field of contemporary music but were keyed into the hotter items of the day, the name Slonimsky is most associated with the book *Lexicon of Musical Invective*. What is so fitting to us in framing our remarks here is how much "Lexicon" itself suggests the subject of immortality. It's actually also about human short-sightedness. What Slonimsky accomplished in a most witty manner was to contrast historical fact with current percep-



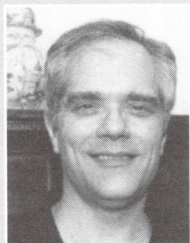
Beethoven

tions. We accept the names of Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, et al as great musical figures. But the first observations of their work tended toward petty peevishness, discomfort, bitchiness, if you will, and all those "attributes" perpetually placed at the doorstep of musical observers. Yes, one does laugh a lot reading these critiques, but there is also much serious thought that went into the compilation of this book that, with all of his other accomplishments, will seal Slonimsky's immortality. For one thing, one might ask whether the human condition is capable of identifying a true genius right off the bat. We are essentially beholden to custom and normality; we are members of families, tribes, national identities; and we don't tend to like revolutionaries. The great artists were largely upsetters of convention and were often scoffed at on the one hand or, at the other extreme, totally ignored.



Brahms

In Joe Pehrson's interview with Electra, we hear that her father was a very funny man. Humor is certainly not anathema to immortality; it's one of the most valued commodities we share in life. It's often what keeps a name in our memories, from Aristophanes to Mark Twain to Laurel and Hardy. In music, humor is less prominent, unless, perhaps, one is a writer. Composition tends to be a serious art form because humor in the music itself is hard to produce, with very few exceptions. Will Peter Schickele, for example, become an immortal?



Joseph Pehrson

Nicolas Slonimsky seems to have covered all the bases: he composed funny music, he authored critically acclaimed books and he made many witty and perceptive observations, including the championing of composers he felt were geniuses but who were in low critical esteem at the time. Those composers went on to become classics, so one can utter a great big "Hah!" to that.

And so Electra Slonimsky Yourke has done us a great service by, as she puts it, seeing to it that his voice is heard. Pages 5 through 7 of this issue may just serve to arouse your curiosity about that voice.

BRAVI to...

Sean Hickey, one of our more enterprising editorial contributors, on the release of "Left at the Fork in the Road," by Naxos, the



Sean Hickey

company he is employed with. The CD contains his ambitious *Sagesse* (see Recent Releases) ... Also, for his receiving commissions from: (1) violinist Yulia Sakharova for a violin and piano work to be premiered at New York's Steinway Hall, the commission being funded by the Musicians Club of New York; (2) Stefan Hoskuldsson and the Iceland Symphony to write a flute concerto also to be recorded, coupled with the Lowell Liebermann concerto, as planned; (3) Mr. Hoskuldsson, for another work, for flute, viola and harp performed by Trio St. Germain for its 2006-07 concert season, with planned support coming from the Barlow Fund; (4) clarinetist David Gould and the Metro Chamber Orchestra for a new concerto for his instrument and string orchestra, with the appealing idea of an alternate version for clarinet and string quintet. His orchestra will give the premiere in March 2007, with anticipated support from AMC, ACF or Meet the Composer ... **Tania León**, for her being awarded a commission from the prestigious Fromm Music Foundation of Harvard University to write her first string quartet to be performed in the Spring of 2007 by the dynamic Del Sol String Quartet ... and for her appearance on the live program *Noticiero del Mediodía*, broadcast via Telemundo on December 14th. She was interviewed by Odalys



Tania León

Medina and spoke about her life as a composer and conductor ...

Richard Adams, artistic director of *Opus 21*, for that group's being awarded the 2005-06 First Prize for Adventurous Programming from Chamber Music America



Richard Adams

and ASCAP in the category of New Music Ensemble during CMA's recent national conference (See our review of a recent concert in Dotted Notes)

... **Terry Winter Owens**, for her participation in a recording chosen by

Radio KLARA in Belgium as CD of the week. The CD is Jan Guns' "Windows on the Bass Clarinet," produced by Phaedra Records, the fourth track of which is a "masterful" performance of *Klage* scored for bass clarinet, triangle and narrator ...

William Bolcom and **Joan Morris**,

for the raves they continue to get from the critics for their outstanding *team ups*. According to *The Post and Courier*, "Mr. Bolcom's probably the best ragtime/ show pianist alive. Ms.



Terry Winter Owens

Morris is the best singer of cabaret songs I have ever heard." For a riotous caricature of the pair followed by a fun-filled heap of superlatives we suggest you log onto www.bolcomandmorris.com/. [Editor's note: To be eligible to appear in Bravi to... one must be a paid subscriber or contributor to *New Music Connoisseur*.]



An Interview with ELECTRA SLONIMSKY YOURKE



Nicolas Slonimsky lived a long and fruitful life as a practitioner of the musical arts in many idiosyncratic ways. He was employed as an opera coach who joined the Eastman faculty right after coming to the US from Russia via Paris and other temporary havens in 1923 and then soon after became secretary to Serge Koussevitsky. As a conductor, he championed and introduced much of the latest American music to audiences in Europe, South America and the US. He was also a composer, with some of his works scored for odd "instruments," as e.g., *Typographical Errors* (1941), which features a typewriter and the sound of a cat meowing, and *My Toy Balloon* (1942), for orchestra and 100 balloons. He is now most noted for his prolific authorship and editing, including *Lexicon of Musical Invective*, an anthology of hostile critiques of music now considered masterworks.

The following transcribed text is from an exclusive New Music Connoisseur interview by Joseph Pehrson with Nicolas' daughter, Electra Slonimsky Yourke, last November. It was precipitated by the recently released set of 4 books published by Routledge and edited by Ms. Yourke, *Nicolas Slonimsky: Writings on Music*. This text is an extract from the full interview available as streaming and downloadable mp3 sound files on NMC's website, www.newmusicon.org.

Pehrson: What intrigued me about doing this project was the fact that your father

was such an unusual individual. I think that he really has attracted many different people from a very wide spectrum of the music community and the arts community. It's unusual when somebody with such a deep musicological and historical interest perks up the enthusiasm of the avant-garde, as well.

Yourke: He had a combination of the elements of a scholar in the intelligence, in the educational background and the family example for scholarship without the temperament of a scholar. So, he brought to whatever he chose to apply himself very deep skills and knowledge, but he wanted to have some fun with it and when he was done, he wanted to be done with it. So, he couldn't simply specialize in something. He was not the scholarly person who was going to munch his way through a century and write papers about everybody and then papers about the papers.

Pehrson: In addition, when you think of all the other things that he did—his performing and his composing, the conducting—it was a terrifically varied career, and yet he had the patience to sit down and be termed a lexicographer!

Yourke: He had the great desire to show that he got it right and others got it wrong, and that was something that was characteristic of him. He took sometimes a sort of fun-filled delight in pointing out that other people had gotten things wrong. So once, as *Perfect Pitch*, his autobiography notes, his eyes fell on this

encyclopedia he was asked to edit, it was like candy because he kept finding things that were wrong, wrong, wrong!

Pehrson: This was Baker's, of course.

Yourke: This was Baker's. He took it over completely in the early 1950's. He was always collecting new biographies and dates, in particular.

Pehrson: We have here his four books in front of me, and the experience of reading them was a journey going through various aspects of his life and various kinds of writings and ending in a musical excursion with a CD that's in the very last book, with the ultimate singing of Nicolas Slonimsky himself with his inimitable "Children Cry for Castoria," one of his signature works. This is almost in an Andy Warhol vein, I think, in his fascination with American advertising and the lyrics, which were based on an advertising text from Castoria laxative.

Yourke: When he came to this country, he didn't speak any English and he got on the boat with a British book about the English language, as it happens, and he simply studied it, as he put it, as if it were an extinct dialect. He did know Latin and a fair amount of Greek and, of course, German and French. So, he put it together from those pieces. He was always interested in the *lingua franca*, in the language as it is spoken, and the expressions and that sort of thing, and he found the ads, the advertisements, a great source. And, he

hadn't really seen advertisements of that kind in Europe. His pieces he calls the "first singing commercials."

Pehrson: Before we get too far ahead of ourselves, I want to make sure that our readers know how to get to the Slonimsky website. Nicolas Slonimsky's books are available through his website and the publisher Routledge. They're also available on Amazon.com if you search "Nicolas Slonimsky." People will want to see the tremendous website that Electra has put together here: www.slonimsky.net.

Yourke: In fact, it is a work in progress, and it's going to get finished. My son did a good deal of it.

Pehrson: I found it a fascinating website. Everything is "clickable," almost every image and funny things, like the cat which meows, and you click on the orange and get the famous Chopin "Black Key" Etude. Could you please explain a little bit about that?

Yourke: He had a few parlor tricks, and one of them was to play the "Black Key" Etude with an orange in the right hand. You will hear the piece if you click on the orange. Regarding the books, the first volume is a collection of articles from the Boston Evening Transcript which was one of those revered old newspapers in Boston which focused on, particularly, the arts, and he wrote for them on a freelance basis evidently, usually about composers, in some instances performers, but usually about composers who were visiting Boston or whose works were being played in Boston, usually by the Boston Symphony. So, it's an interesting collection because he writes about people who subsequently became the icons. At an earlier stage they were still evolving, and others who were thought to be "hot stuff" at the time but turned out not to be pantheon material, and so, in that sense it offers a contemporary view, slices into a particular period, about 1927 to, I think, about 1935 in Boston.

Pehrson: I was amazed, actually, because, he'll be writing about the Copland-Sessions concerts, and it's as though they are going on right now. So that kind of "slice of time" was fascinating.

Yourke: Of course he was personally familiar with Copland and Sessions, and by the time you move through this period he had already established himself in 1931-32 as a proponent of modern American music. He was a figure himself at this point and the writings present a certain immediacy that is perhaps different from looking back at those composers and, indeed, they're probably different from his writings later on about those same people and, perhaps, those same works.

Pehrson: And they're all relatively short since they are basically newspaper articles.

Yourke: Some of them are rather analytical and somewhat technical, but they're unique. I don't see his style quite like that anywhere else.

Pehrson: The second book on Russia is one of my very favorites.

Yourke: Yes, there he is revisiting his native territory Russia, looking at the composers and the music, and the final selection is a sort of narrative of a visit that he made under the auspices of the State Department to Eastern Europe and Russia as an ambassador of American music, which was part of the purpose since he took with him scores and so forth. He met with both the establishment and the "musical underground." He came speaking Russian in 1962 and they were fascinated to have him come and tell them what was going on in the West since, I guess, they really didn't know; they really didn't have access. I imagine he must have been speaking from morning until night and enjoying every bit of it.

Pehrson: One of the most interesting things I found in the Russian volume was the perspective on censorship. I had never seen the inside of that. One thing that I found very interesting is the fact that it was much more complex than a person might think. I guess there were some committees associated with the Composers Union that were trying to simplify the music and so forth, but there were always people opposed to that and it never seemed like a monolithic thing—there were too many

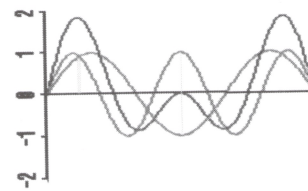
intelligent people there to let them just "steamroll" over things. It seemed like a much more gray area and changing circumstance than I would have imagined. Another question has to do with Shostakovich, since he has a rather lengthy chapter on the various symphonies, and he goes into detail. But he never mentions much about the so-called "mysterious" referential things in Shostakovich: the shorthand for opposition to the regime. I'm wondering if people aren't making those up or dreaming those and they really don't exist.

Yourke: Shostakovich is such a controversial character, but my father resisted conspiratorial viewpoints of anything unless it's absolutely clear that something is a code for something or initials are an acronym, and he would tend to find it going too far. The other side is that Shostakovich is a genuinely mysterious character. I'm told this is kind of a seminal article. I don't know whether the "mystery letters" had emerged at that point.

Pehrson: And the third book?

Yourke: Well, it's music of the Modern Era with articles about composers and one longer monograph on Roy Harris, with whom he had a close personal friendship, and there are a series of fairly lengthy articles on various aspects of modern music, some of them quite

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analytic.

Pehrson: When you think about your father in the overview, would you agree that he seems to me to be someone who is in the "new music camp?"

Yourke: Yes, because he was, shall I say, bored by the classics. He knew them all too well. He did not find anything in them that he didn't already know about and, it may seem surprising, but he was not a person who sat and listened to music for pleasure. He didn't need to hear the "warhorses," as he called them, over and over, much as he appreciated them. He could appreciate a really fine rendition, but it was more the response of a conductor. He didn't listen to music for pleasure unless it was something new and challenging, and then he didn't have to listen to it: he could read it, as he did with Ives.

Pehrson: That's something I really wanted to talk about, too. He was known, of course, as a conductor early on and, in fact, I had remembered from the past that he was the person who had first conducted one of my favorite pieces of music, which is the Varèse *Ionisation*. What I didn't know until I looked at my own score for *Ionisation*, was that the score was dedicated to him.

Yourke: Yes, *Au Premier Ionisateur*.

Pehrson: Well he did the first recording, I believe, of *Ionisation* as well?

Yourke: Yes

Pehrson: I thought that was a curious story because he said that, since the musicians couldn't really play the music, he had gotten together a bunch of composers to do the recording, which was the first recording with Carlos Salzedo and Wallingford Riegger, and Bill Schuman on the lion's roar. They were all playing the percussion parts and, as composers, at least they could do the intricate rhythms accurately.

Yourke: That's right, yes.

Pehrson: That complexity certainly is a factor as to why the musicians might have revolted, I suppose.

Yourke: Yes, well Varèse always made people mad [laughs], which was fine. He liked that fine.

Pehrson: I thought it was also fascinating that Varèse believed that someday he and Ives would be recognized. At that time they spoke of it with your father and it seemed like some kind of lunacy, something so hypothetical or unbelievable—just a fantasy to imagine that Ives and Varèse would be so notable. And, of course, here they are.

Yourke: Here they are, now the classics.

Pehrson: Of course, we should mention about your father living to the age of 101.

Yourke: Yes 101, and he really did very well until his very late age, being very active. Well, we went to Russia for his 98th birthday, and he

went into decline only at the very end.

Pehrson: You mean after 100? [laughs]

Yourke: That's right. He didn't have illnesses, he didn't have disease. He didn't even have arthritis.

Pehrson: The end of this Book 3 is a long monograph on Roy Harris, which I believe had never been published before.

Yourke: It had never been published.

Pehrson: It's unfortunate, but Roy Harris's music is just not heard so much anymore, and I wasn't really acquainted with it. After listening to it recently, it seems quite substantial and interesting writing. He did a lot of work, and it seems unfortunate that it has disappeared so completely.

Yourke: To me it was surprising the difference between his music and the person. As a person, he was tall, rangy, very Western, extremely disorganized, always starting things and not finishing them—and he always had a house full of people, students who were living with him. Wherever he was—and he was always moving from one place to another—he would invite my father to come. We spent three wonderful summers in Colorado Springs where he was teaching there at Colorado College. There was a messy trail of unfinished projects. Then I read what he wrote about his own music and it seems so tightly constructed and conceptual, so abstract. He went to Paris and studied and took in all the lessons of the structural approach, fugues and so forth.

Pehrson: Well, Nadia Boulanger.

Yourke: Yes, and it was so designed and so structured and it just seemed so opposite to his personality.

Pehrson: Well he must have been quite convincing, because the article showed that Nadia Boulanger was actually performing in some of his pieces, so he must have had a very strong personality to convince her to perform in ensembles of his works in public.

Yourke: He did have tremendous promise that didn't quite flower.

Pehrson: Your father was probably quite fascinated with him because he was, literally, born in a log cabin, the quintessential American story, which was probably quite a novelty from your father's perspective.

Yourke: Yes, I think he found that whole picture very attractive and appealing.

Pehrson: Well, there is a list of Roy Harris compositions at the very end of the third book as well.

Yourke: I included that because I think that might be quite definitive up to that time.

Pehrson: And what motivated the Slonimskyana volume, which is Volume 4?

Yourke: Well, there was a lot of good stuff that didn't fit into any of the other catego-

ries. Then there is funny stuff. "Sex and the Music Librarian, a Seminal Article," and other oddities—chess—that are fun, and it seemed a shame if you were doing four volumes of Slonimsky to let these go by the wayside.

Pehrson: Because your father was very funny sometimes?

Yourke: Yes!

Pehrson: Was he oftentimes funny, or just sometimes funny?

Yourke: He was often quite funny.

Pehrson: I thought so.

Yourke: He could also overdo it. He had a lot of verbal humor, and he saw the humor in a lot of situations. That made his lectures rather popular. There were times when his sense of humor got away from him and he forgot that he was there to provide something of substance. [laughs]

Pehrson: I think the sense of humor is one reason that he's so popular today.

Yourke: Yes. There's no question.

Pehrson: In the fourth volume there is also quite a serious article that I think is one of the most valuable in the entire set, and that's the very first one which is on American chamber music. I found that very useful, because so many composers are shown there, and I think it just illustrates how many fine composers we've had in this country and how much chamber music they've actually written.

Yourke: I felt it was especially important to preserve this, because it's a little mini-history.

Pehrson: Well, we greatly appreciate this fantastic opportunity to go through these books and materials with you and hear about your father. I'm sorry I never had a chance to meet him. That would have been a very exciting experience for me, but his legacy and attitudes live on. I can't imagine a more widely varied career and a more engaging individual than your father in every dimension of music and respected by so many different people across the broadest spectrum of music and still as intriguing today to many as ever. So, we're certainly delighted to have had this opportunity to do the interview, and I hope that people will get an opportunity to pick up these books and go through them because it's a real journey from beginning to end which ends with Nicolas Slonimsky's voice itself singing his Advertising Songs on the CD in the fourth volume. So, Electra I want to thank you so much again for this great time and opportunity.

Yourke: I want to thank you and I will continue to see that his voice is heard.



SCI National Conference, 2005: "A Most Successful Affair"

**Society of Composers, Inc. National Conference.
Presented by the School of Music,
the University of North Carolina
at Greensboro,
October 12-15, 2005**

by Greg A Steinke © 2005

The 2005 National Conference of Society of Composers, Inc. was hosted by UNCG faculty member Mark Engebretson. Fourteen concerts of SCI compositions were scheduled and performed by featured ensembles: Thelema Trio (from Belgium), Valdosta Faculty Chamber Ensemble, and UNCG's own Chorale, Chamber Singers, Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, East-Wind Ensemble, Red Clay Saxophone Quartet, Brass Ensemble, Faculty String Quartet, and Percussion Ensemble, as well as a number of individual UNCG and guest musicians. About 77 composers and seven composer-presenters attended the conference for performances and presentations. Libby Larsen was the keynote speaker and guest composer. The conference brought an encouraging turnout of composers, as well as Greensboro community people.

The conference was preceded by an unusual and most interesting concert by the Thelema Trio of Belgium on Wednesday evening. The evening's fare consisted of works written especially for the trio by one of its members or others. Each of the players, Ward De Vleeschhouwer (piano and electronic keyboard), Peter Verdonck (alto, tenor and baritone saxophone) and Marco Antonio Mazzini (clarinet, bass and contrabass clarinet), made each new mix of instruments work like a charm and seemingly switched effortlessly among their instruments without a glitch. All of the works presented on this concert were from Europe or South America and represented composers who had written works especially for the trio to play on this concert as part of a tour of the US and South America. The works presented offered a very wide range of styles, new performance techniques,



Composer Greg Steinke (center) with viola soloist Scott Rawls (left), and conductor Robert Gutter, after premiere of Steinke's viola concerto at UNCG

and a chance for each performer to really shine and strut performance chops that seemed endless and yet continued to grow with each new piece we heard.

Next morning, the conference itself began with a concert of works for percussion and brass ensembles presented by ensembles from UNCG. This was immediately followed by a paper presentation by Edward Green, "Scelsi in the Mainstream; Or, *Trio à Cordes*," that offered extensive commentary on the composer Giacinto Scelsi. This opus is not necessarily a household-known quantity, even around musically erudite folks. We were treated to a fascinating paper about a composer who is relatively new to us.

After lunch, there were more chamber concerts that included a work by Carl Schimmel, an SCI/ASCAP Student Competition winner. The day was capped off by an excellent eve-

ning concert presented by the UNCG Wind Ensemble. Represented were composers Jesse Ayers, Derek Healey (who inspired this listener with a stimulating approach to wind ensemble writing), Neil McKay, Arthur Gottschalk (who had an excellent piece that was unfortunately marred by overwriting in the wind accompaniment to the detriment of the soloist), and Paul Siskind (who offered a nice bit of whimsy).

Friday morning opened with a very early panel session on "Improvisation and Contemporary Music: Intersections and Cross Fertilizations," with Geoffrey Kidde as moderator and Janice Misurell-Mitchell and Benjamin Boone as panelists. The discussion was a lively interchange on the subject, though to a rather sparse audience. The first concert of the day focused on UNCG faculty ensembles of wind and string instruments. There were two more paper presentations: "Frank Martin's Oratorio *In Terra Pax*," by Maria Niederberger, provided some excellent perspectives and insights into Martin's compositional approaches and

Continued on page 22

Cheating, Lying, etc. with "True Conviction?"

by Leo Kraft ©2005

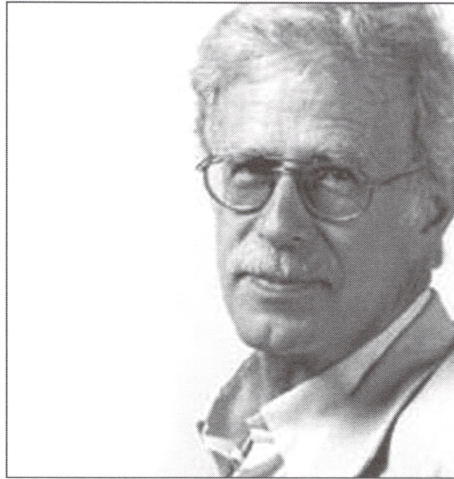
David Lang: *Cheating, Lying, Stealing* • **Magnus Lindberg:** *Ablauf* • **Jonathan Harvey:** Piano Trio • **Dorrance Stalvey:** *Exordium, Genesis, Dawn* • **Christopher Rouse:** *Rotae Passionis*. NYNME. Merkin Concert Hall, NY, NY. March 14, 2005

The enterprising musicians of the New York New Music Ensemble offered an evening of five compositions at Merkin last March, works mostly from the Seventies and Eighties.

I found it difficult to say which of the five compositions was outstanding. They all shared a similar esthetic, stemming from minimalism but going beyond it for the most part. David Lang's *Cheating, Lying, Stealing* (1993), was the most straightforward expression of that approach. Sectional in form, it began each part with a clearly stated figure that was then repeated with little variation, acquiring other repeated figures as the section progressed.

The Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg's *Ablauf* (1983/1988) for clarinet and two bass drums certainly had repetition at its core, but there was a certain amount of change as well. It struck me as a splendid vehicle for the talents of Jean Kopperud who played, vocalized while playing, and emitted some recognizable musical sounds while at the same time doing battle with bass drums.

The appearance on the program of a work entitled *Piano Trio* (1971) by the British composer Jonathan Harvey made me wonder if a



Jonathan Harvey

piece with such an old fashioned title would be out of place in this program. I need not have worried, however, for Mr. Harvey's three-movement composition was of the same type as the rest of the works. Emphasizing the upper register of the piano, it presented a series of wispy ideas with little discernible connection. There was some contrast between the movements, but not as much as I think the composer intended. The ending was not convincing; the piece simply ran out of energy.

Dorrance Stalvey's *Exordium, Genesis, Dawn* (1990) for the six members of NYNME, written for the group, utilizes the abilities of the players and fills the ear with attractive sonorities. I found it difficult to follow the continuity of the music. This despite the fact that many of what I took to be phrases were punctuated by a loud thwack on the bass drum, a cadential device which seemed effective at first but was used too frequently for my taste. Once again I found the quiet ending to be anticlimactic after the frenetic activity of most of the piece.

The concluding work on the program was *Rotae Passionis* (1982) by Christopher Rouse. In this composition the six players of NYNME were joined by a violinist. In three large sections Mr. Rouse's has overtones of spirituality that set it apart from the other, decidedly secular works, and made an impressive conclusion to the concert. This, despite the fact that I could not readily follow the musical line of thought and did not find the sonorities, the sheer sound of the piece, to be particularly attractive.

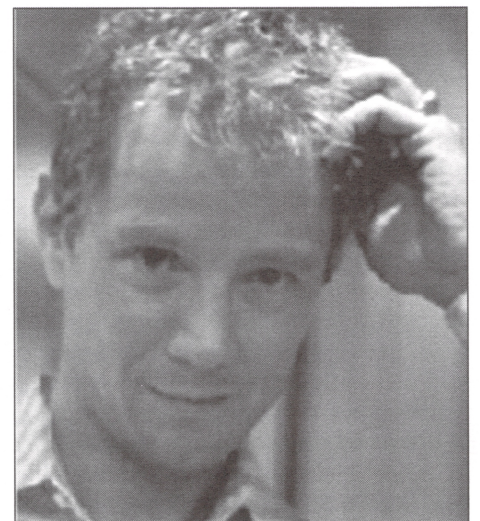
Overall, the main concern of the compositions were texture, register, density, and tone color. Pitch relationships, which had reigned supreme in earlier music, were quite secondary. Indeed, the notes and their combinations were chosen more for their timbral qualities than for the kinds of connections characteristic of most music before 1960. No doubt there is a relationship between such an approach to composition and minimalism, as the appropriateness of Mr. Lang's work on the program clearly indicated.

The players of NYNME and their guests outdid themselves in presenting each work in the best possible light. Aside from their high level of technical excellence, they played with true conviction. I admired all the performances, while at the same time wondering if the works on the program were not more fun to play than to listen to.

The Battle Between War And Sex

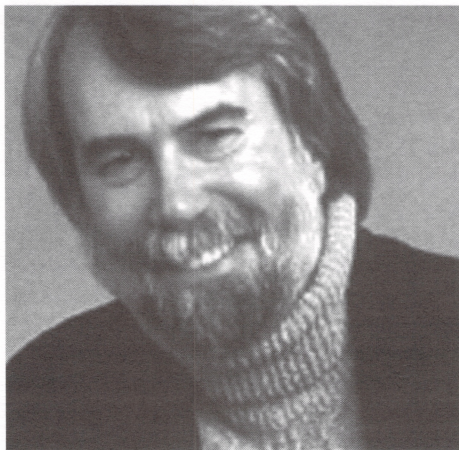
by James L. Paulk ©2005

Mark Adamo: *Lysistrata, or the Nude Goddess*. Libretto by the composer. **Stefan Lano, Conductor; Michael Kahn, Director.** Houston Grand Opera, March 19, 2005. World Premiere.



Mark Adamo—"bright and quick-witted"

Mark Adamo, a former music critic turned composer, burst onto the opera scene in 1998 with *Little Women*. Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera, it has become perhaps the most



Christopher Rouse

popular American opera written in the past few decades, with dozens of productions, including New York City Opera's, a national telecast of the 2000 Houston revival, a production last year in Mexico City, and one planned for Tokyo. Popularity is not necessarily a good sign, of course (those who wish to argue are instructed to tune in any top-rated radio station), and I had mixed feelings about it. The essential problem with *Little Women* was a sappy libretto based on a decidedly mediocre novel popular with young girls. Still, there was a sophistication in the score far beyond that of the text. So I was intrigued when HGO announced that it had commissioned a second opera, *Lysistrata*, from Mr. Adamo. Under the reign of long-time director David Gockley (who departs for San Francisco at the end of this season), the company has established a pattern of repeat commissions from the composers it favors, allowing them to develop.

In Aristophanes' simple, somewhat vulgar farce, the women, tired of war, declare a sex strike until the men agree to make peace. Adamo has kept the phalli (fake penises that grow more erect as the strike progresses) and the farting, but has stretched the text into a much blunter, more strident feminist and anti-war political work. And, presumably wanting to write love songs, he has added pairs of lovers. The love duets do prettify things a bit, providing some relief from all that preaching. And there is a layered complexity to the text that is appealing. But the brittle satire and wit of the original has given way here to broad and obvious comedy. Apparently thinking this was necessary to appeal to a larger audience, Adamo has filled the opera with less-than-subtle puns and rhymes. The Houston audience seemed transfixed, so perhaps he is once again correct in his assessment of what it takes to succeed.

Adamo, who is bright and quick-witted in person, apparently saved his subtlety for the score. Here he has again demonstrated his mastery of the operatic language *de jour*, this time with a fast-paced, melodic and tonal vocal line surrounded by dissonance from the orchestra. At its best, the vocal line sounds like it could have been written by Stephen Sondheim (I mean this as a compliment), but the orchestra seems to be saying: "this is an opera, not a Broadway musical." While the latter effect can seem a bit self-conscious, and while it would be nice to hear something a bit more forward-looking, it must be said that it works rather well. As with the libretto, there is quite a bit of complexity for those who can manage to follow it. For example, motifs sung by one character are sometimes repeated by another in a different key. These touches are easy to miss, however, because the text goes by so fast and the score is subtle enough to get pushed aside by all but the most attentive

audience members. For this reason, this opera would probably reward a repeat visit.

The young cast was mostly excellent. Emily Pulley, a rapidly rising young American soprano, handled the stratospheric and acrobatic demands of the title role with ease, helped, no doubt, by the lovely acoustics of the Cullen Theater (the smaller of the Wortham Center's two performance spaces, used for chamber operas). Her role calls for some rather silly clowning around, which she carried a bit too far, but that is probably the fault of director Michael Kahn.

"Why can't concerts always be fun like this?"

Soprano Laquita Mitchell turned in a more nuanced performance as Myrrhine, and she got some of the best, jazziest music. The role of Nico, lover of Lysia (*Lysistrata*'s name until the end of the opera), was sung with a bit of gusto by tenor Chad Shelton. Bass Joshua Winograde was a noble Leonides, the Spartan general. He managed to overcome the unfortunate cartoonish accent required of the Spartans, which, however, doomed mezzo Victoria Livengood, who sang the role of his wife.

The production was rather Spartan, so to speak, and colorful in a kitschy way. A small, rotating box served as a temple, bedroom, battlefield, etc., and the action took place around it. The nude goddess of the subtitle turns out to be a statue, by the way. As with most modern opera, however, the stage movement and acting were a cut above the standard for traditional opera, an effect aided by the good-looking youthful cast. Stefan Lano conducted the small ensemble, which included extra percussion. *Lysistrata* will come to New York City Opera next season, and is likely to be picked up elsewhere rather soon. This is a composer who knows how to keep his audience happy, a talent that opera administrators haven't failed to notice.

Taylor Sews Together an 'Extravagant' Concert

by Joseph Pehrson ©2005

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC PRESENTS "WILD, EXTRAVAGANT UNIVERSE," A CONCERT WITH DAVID TAYLOR AND FRIENDS. John C. Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music. March 23, 2005

There were signs that this wasn't going to be an ordinary concert. In the first place, ushers distributed uninflated balloons to the audience on entrance – as participatory instruments. The large Borden Auditorium at Manhattan School of Music was well filled, despite a heavily driving early Spring sleet storm. Somebody had been "clued in." Yes, this was a David Taylor extravaganza, probably one of the most imaginative concert formats around.

Taylor's presentation reminded me of a 1960's "happening" or a college multimedia presentation. There was one crucial difference here, though: everything was on a high artistic level, with dancers from the Erick Hawkins company and musicians of the very highest caliber, including the performing virtuoso David Taylor himself.

Taylor has a spectacular background, which includes degrees from Juilliard as well as very successful forays into the realm of jazz and pop music. He's done it all, and is quite recognized in the field. Everybody's heard of him, but how many people know his prowess as an impresario? This was very much in evidence at his "Wild Extravagant Universe" concert.

There were some real highlights. One of my very favorites was a jazz-influenced composition by Daniel Schnyder called *SubZero*. This piece for piano, percussion and Taylor on bass trombone was fast. It was extremely virtuosic. Written in a jazz idiom, the work was completely written out and it included the dexterous Matt Herskowitz on piano, a musician equally comfortable in both the classical and jazz worlds. Pablo Rieppi was on percussion. For something as cool as the title *SubZero* this piece really "cooked." I would have liked to have heard it again to catch everything.

As part of the amazing variety of this concert, a complex piece, *Runes*, by David Noon was danced to by the Erick Hawkins Dance company, with the dancers in an androgynous cast. Dave Taylor, who played in everything, by the way, and Tim Cobb on contrabass performed this work from the middle of the auditorium in darkness with illuminated music stands. There was much variety in the placement of musi-



David Taylor— "...a performing virtuoso"

cians in this concert as well. In a more serious "new music" mode, the Noon piece was a nice contrast to the Schnyder jazz piece.

But there was even more contrast. Taylor

took it upon himself to arrange Schubert's song *Der Doppelgänger* for bass trombone and five doublebass players who were staged on a platform. This had to be about the most surreal moment of this concert. Taylor would play the trombone against this weird doublebass chorus, all in a kind of extended tonal take off on the Schubert. You really had to be there. This was something different.

Composer Charles Coleman sang his new piece, *Libertad*, to words by Walt Whitman from the back of the auditorium. Again, doublebassist Tim Cobb performed with the ubiquitous recitalist Dave Taylor. This piece provided continued contrast.

In a more traditional "new music" vein, Taylor presented a work by Lucia Dlugoszewski called *Dark Amour Elusive Pierce*. Long associated with the Erick Hawkins Dance company as percussionist, composer and accompanist, Dlugoszewski, who was married to Hawkins, provided many of the accompaniments to his dances. David Taylor had studied a bit with her and learned something about new music presentation. One thing is clear: even if the music gets a bit abstract, Taylor figures out a way of livening things up. In this case he had Katherine Duke, who also played a bit of prepared piano, conduct. Duke is a lithe, beautiful young lady and she was presented to the audience in profile as she navigated the complexities of rhythm in the piece. Now, this is a way to liven up any new music presentation. This piece was accompanied by the Hawkins troupe with projected visuals on both sides of the auditorium which looked like some kind of colorful, tentacled octopus. I mentioned you wouldn't be bored during this concert.

Composer Gene Pritsker was featured in a work that he performed on stage with electric guitar, with Taylor and Justin DiCioccio on drums. This is Pritsker's *Reflections on the poem "The Carcass" by Charles Baudelaire*. David Taylor did the honors of reading the poem before the performance and managed to make this reading fascinating. He can't seem to do anything that isn't fun to listen to or watch. He's pretty spectacular. The Pritsker piece, although mostly a sentient monodic line played in unison in both the guitar and bass trombone, adds dimension by the guitar harmonics and also by enjoyable sections of rhythmic improvisation. This is an intensely original work.

The evening concluded with a piece *Solemente in W* by Franz Hackl. Again there was dance, but there was even more sophisticated video projection on both sides of the hall, although at times the visuals looked a bit like a medical eye operation gone bad. It was "wild and extravagant," though, in typical Taylor fashion. This was the big moment for balloon accompaniment, as audience members indulged their creative rights to make squeezed

balloon sounds. What fun! Why can't concerts always be fun like this? Maybe we would entice that elusive ephemera: an enthusiastic, young audience for contemporary music.

The Orpheus 'Legend' Lives On

by Barry O'Neal ©2005

Music by Barber, Adams, Rouse and Mozart. Orpheus. Barbara Bonney, Soprano. Isaac Stern Auditorium, Carnegie Hall. April 9, 2005

Orpheus has developed so nicely over the past thirty or so years, one tends to take for granted the novel concept on which the chamber orchestra was founded. When the

celebrated conductorless ensemble debuted in 1972, the idea of a self-governing organization without a charismatic leader was at once "of its time" (the time of communes and the



Barbara Bonney

attempted submergence of the "cult of personality" in the promotion of the common good) and a near affront to the age of the domineering maestro.

As it showed at its April 9th concert at Carnegie Hall, the occasional rigidity that characterized the early years has given way to a truly collegial give and take, and if anything, the playing is more spectacular than ever.

The program began with an ingratiating performance of *Mozart's Symphony No. 29 in A Major, KV 201* and continued with Barbara Bonney as soloist in Haydn's wonderful concert aria from 1795, *Scena di Berenice*. Ms. Bonney, long admired in soubrette parts at the Metropolitan Opera and elsewhere, is often at her best in concert and recital situations. She seemed a little out of sorts and over-parted in the Haydn and there were some squally moments in the second cabaletta-styled aria ("*Perché, se tanti siete...*"). Once again, the orchestral playing

was remarkable and carefully tailored to the mercurial moods the singer is called upon to convey.

However, the prime purpose for attending this particular concert, was to hear the music performed on the second half: Samuel Barber's glorious *Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op. 24* and John Adams' spiky *Chamber Symphony* (1994), revamped slightly for *Orpheus* with multiple strings instead of solo players (as it is in the original printed score). *Orpheus* usually shines in music of our own time and this evening was no exception. In the Barber, Ms. Bonney was more in her element, though her diction could have been clearer in projecting James Agee's touching words. Still, the voice is lovely and nearly perfect for this music. Ms. Bonney didn't overdo the child-like effects some singers have employed in this iconic example of American vocal music at its best, and the

Bonney "...nearly perfect for this music"

players positively glowed in the vivid, poetic and descriptive music with which Mr. Barber has surrounded the conversational setting of Agee's intense, but homey prose poem. The rondo-like recurrences of the opening music, each return more poignant and intense, were lovingly conveyed, and the deeply moving middle section ("On the rough wet grass of the back yard") rose naturally to the climactic line "May God bless my people..." Ms. Bonney was searing and the band was with her all the way. On the whole, this was a satisfying and involving performance.

Orpheus saved their best work for the final work on the program. John Adams' *Chamber Symphony* has always challenged this listener. The mixture of styles, cartoon music, 1920s modernism cum Milhaud-esque jazz and traces of the minimalism from which Adam's musical approach sprang, was initially off-putting. But heard now in the context of his development (and in this astonishing performance) it seems a remarkably successful experiment in *moto perpetuo*. Each movement sets a machine-like tempo and once in gear, the fundamental tempo proceeds with relentless energy. The supposed influence of Arnold Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No. 1* seems less to the point than Adams' gift for parodying various jazz and neo-classical styles. The brashness of the rhythmic ingenuity and the vigor of the chromatic counterpoint in the first movement ("*Mongrel Airs*") was exhilarating in this performance. "*Aria with Walking Bass*" starts with deceptive simplicity, the titular bass in counterpoint with a bluesy solo trombone melody, but gradually joined by other brass and wind player in an almost cool-jazz style. The intensity mounts, but the basic pulse never changes. Roadrunner, the last movement, revisits the

hard-charging approach of the opening movement, but slows down for a wonderfully loopy but brief violin cadenza before racing to its bracing, cartoon music conclusion. The percussion writing throughout this movement reminded this listener of Darius Milhaud's *Creation du Monde* and the "devilish" Stravinsky of *L'Histoire du Soldat*.

It would be great fun to put these three delights together on the same program. Orpheus was dazzling and one hopes they will record this version of the *Chamber Symphony* someday. The orchestra responds to this kind of virtuosity in instrumental writing with their own brand of expertise. This was a concert that accumulated delights as it went along of his development (and in this astonishing performance), it seems a remarkably successful experiment in *moto perpetuo*. Each movement is like a machine. Once turned on, the clock keeps ticking and the basic tempo proceeds with relentless energy. The supposed influence of Arnold Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No. 1* seems less to the point than Adams' gift for parodying various jazz and neo-classical styles and combining them into a wild and breathless contrapuntal stew. The sheer brashness of the rhythmic ingenuity and relentlessness of the chromatic counterpoint in the first movement, *Mongrel Airs* was breathtaking in this spectacular performance.

Deep in the Heart of Taxes

by Joseph Pehrson ©2005

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC PRESENT TWO MUSICAL THEATER PREMIERES BY BEN YARMOLINSKY. *Alice*; *April 15th Blues*. Melanie Mitrano, soprano; Bruce Rameker, baritone; Silvie Jensen, alto; the "April 15th Chorus and Orchestra. St. Michael's Parish Hall, 225 W. 99th St., NY, NY. Friday, April 15, 2005.

April 15th is surely a taxing day, but Ben Yarmolinsky has been doing his best to mitigate the pain. A very clever fellow, Yarmolinsky has written a short musical theater piece about that dreaded day, and the work is great fun. Called *April 15th Blues*, this work, naturally, had to be presented on Friday, April 15th. (We're assuming most of the members of the audience, who filed into St. Michael's Parish Hall, had already filed their taxes.) In a musical theater tradition, Yarmolinsky's plot is spoken with no recitative, and it's replete with pop-influenced songs. The "book," also



Ben Yarmolinsky

"Pop-influenced songs [like] the notable 'Under the Table Tango' and 'Deduct, Deduct.'"

written by Yarmolinsky, is extremely clever as we follow the day of April 15th in the life of a freelance New York singer/actress, here sung in an exceptional performance by soprano Melanie Mitrano.

Using an appropriate conceit, Yarmolinsky has the voice of the IRS reading the tax form instructions over loudspeakers and sounding like "Big Brother" as our poor protagonist, "Jane Q. Public" tries haplessly to fill in her tax forms. Eventually she realizes, in an extraordinarily damning indictment of our government and its tax system, that she is only able to exist by what she has earned "under the table" as a waitress, teacher, babysitter, etc. This was the notable "Under the Table Tango." As our protagonist proclaims, "You'd do the same if you were me." Finally, she finds that since nothing has been withheld on her 1099s, she owes a substantial sum. Desperation ensues, and it is only when she realizes that she can call on an old boyfriend she had previously dumped, Jeremy Cohen, CPA, sung and performed engagingly by Bruce Rameker, that salvation is possible.

In one of the funniest moments of this production, Jeremy Cohen, the CPA, loosens his tie and does a kind of Elvis number, "Deduct, Deduct" where he gives Jane advice as to what to do on her Schedule C. Needless to say, Jane is forced to exercise "creative license" and deducts whatever comes to her imagination. The technique works, and Ms. Public is saved from taxes and, what would be even worse, banishment from her career in New York to her hometown of Buffalo or, in an even worse scenario, jail. One has the sense that Yarmolinsky, a freelance composer/performer for many years, knows the "ins and outs" of the self-employed

tax filing regulations, an essential in making this situation real and adding to the hilarity.

April 15th Blues was orchestrated for piano, violin and cello with touches of percussion but, at the end, John Bollinger plays vibes as the theatre darkens and a line of tax filers, looking like ghosts or living zombies, marches up towards the stage. This is the decisive moment of tax return filing at the Post Office at midnight, an end to the ordeal. *April 15th Blues*, written in 1998, was commissioned for the now defunct record label CRI, and it sold briskly, for good reason. However, I believe one would really have to see the work performed to get a full sense of it. In short, it is one of the most engaging and entertaining short theater pieces I have seen. It's pretty brilliant, all in all.

The first theater work of the evening was an earlier one from 1981, *Alice*, with words from Lewis Carroll's *Alice and Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Originally presented as a puppet show when Yarmolinsky resided in Tangier, it also contains much engaging music in, mostly, a popular vein. Alto Silvie Jensen made a very pretty and engaging Alice. Yarmolinsky follows many of the familiar plot-lines and characters of Carroll's two books such as "Humpty Dumpty," "Tweedledum & Tweedledee" and "Jabberwocky." These set pieces were all well done, but my very favorite was "Advice from a Caterpillar" near the beginning. This piece really "cooked." I thought these engaging numbers could have been used in places as "background" music to the spoken dialogue. Maybe I just wanted to hear them some more. But this method could also have created more of a sense of continuity, rather than the predictable pattern of set-number, spoken dialogue, set-number, etc. which included a fair amount of stopping and starting. There were also some places where the voices did not fit the range of the music very well. Undoubtedly there wasn't time happen too frequently.

Yarmolinsky's theatre pieces would be very well suited to presentation in a club atmosphere, and I hope he gets the opportunity to showcase them in that kind of informal setting..

Bell, Book and "Commendable"

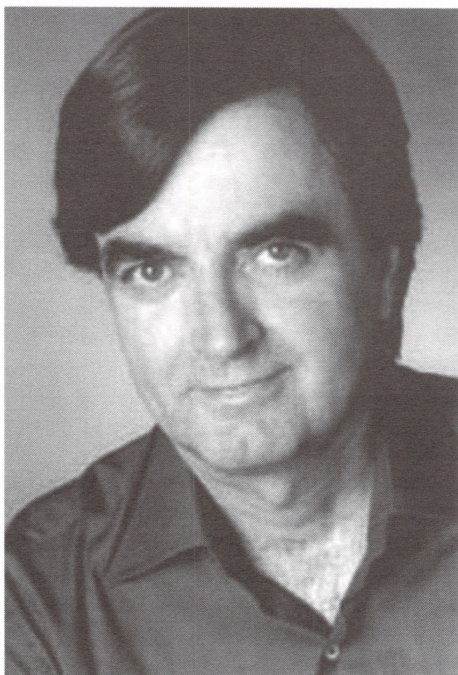
by David Cleary ©2005

THE BOSTON CONSERVATORY PRESENTS A TRIBUTE TO LARRY BELL'S 25 YEARS OF TEACHING. [1] Assorted chamber works. Student and other performers. St. Cecilia's Church. May 2, 2005. [2] THE PIANO MUSIC OF LARRY THOMAS BELL. Mr. Bell performing in Keller Room, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA. May 25, 2005.

Tonemeister Larry Bell, faculty at the Boston Conservatory and the New England Conservatory's Preparatory Division, has been a longtime presence on the Boston new music

scene, and these two events were designed as showcases for his sizable compositional output. Both contained a wide-ranging selection of works that varied in quality, but the best proved first-rate.

The May 2nd concert was devoted to chamber and solo works for nearly every instrument imaginable. The three preludes and fugues selected from the Well Tempered Klavier-inspired piano collection *Reminiscences and Reflections*, Op. 46 (1993-98) are extraordinarily fine, casting this older approach into fluid



Larry Thomas Bell

structures brimming with imagination. There's not an ounce of textbook dryness here; rather, there's plenty of contrast in texture, color, and emotion. Likewise, *Mahler in Blue Light*, Op. 43 (1996), heard here in a rescored version for clarinet (not the original's alto saxophone), cello, and piano, elegantly reinterprets such hoary constructs as intermezzos, rondos, and variation sets into convincingly personal statements. This accomplished selection derives its material from a quoted passage from the title composer's *Das Lied von der Erde* while never letting the source material become a shackle.

Reminiscent of Luciano Berio, Bell has penned several solo works under a catch-all appellation—*Caprice*, in this case—and three of these appeared on the program. The best was *Caprice #4 for Solo Marimba*, Op. 56 (2001), which revels in the instrument's sonic possibilities—a rich, irresistible bonbon of surprising depth. *Caprice #2 for Solo Flute*, Op. 51 (1999) is a well-written work awash in strong Debussy-like perfume, while the jaunty yet repetitive *Caprice #6 for Solo Clarinet*, Op. 73 (2005) tries to evoke elements of gospel-inspired audience participation with questionable success.

The *Eight Poems for Brass Quintet*, Op. 48

(1998) are rearrangements of an earlier choral piece. Along with the marimba *Caprice*, these were the most dissonant sounding works encountered. They're attractive enough, if a bit cramped and reserved. For soprano and piano, *Songs of Time and Eternity*, Op. 64 (2002) are standard American vocal fare, redolent of Daron Hagen and Ned Rorem, that unfortunately benefit little from sing-song vocal rhythms and block-like piano writing. With two exceptions, the performers were students, most being based at the Boston Conservatory. Several of these did a creditable job, with percussionist Nick Tolle and flautist Jaclyn Foley being particular standouts. Pianist Jonathan Bass, faculty at the same institutions as Bell, played *Reminiscences* with flamboyant ardor while not neglecting the more intimate and expressive aspects of this score; his finger work and sound were splendid. Bell himself took to the keyboard on *Mahler in Blue Light*, performing with an ideal mix of soloist prowess and chamber music sensitivity.

Like the earlier event, the May 25th piano recital proved a mixed bag. It's a pleasure to report that *Sonata #2 "Tala," Op. 61* (2002) was a slice of sheer joy. The piece's harmonic language and rhythmic material show a strong affinity for Messiaen's piano oeuvre, but Bell effortlessly pushes the music from here into Art Tatum-like jazz figuration, deftly outlining the similarities between these seemingly disparate idioms. And despite being a one-movement selection, this is truly a sonata in the Lisztian sense, with clear analogues to exposition/development/recapitulation procedures, expressed here in an inimitable way.

Two smaller works had their merits as well. The four-movement *Miniature Diversions*, Op. 15 (1983) is a charming collection distinguished by Charles Ives inspired polytonality, subtly tricky rhythmic procedures in its even-numbered movements, and an engaging manner of speech. *Elegy*, Op. 72 (2005), written in memory of both Edwin G. Olmstead (Bell's father-in-law) and William A. Silverman, was the most obviously triadic composition heard, a work that shines brightest in its lovely outer sections, which mildly suggest Edward MacDowell and similar American composers of that era.

Both *Revivals*, Op. 21 (1983-84) and *Four Chorale Preludes*, Op. 67 (2003) are sizable multi-movement listens that co-opt church hymns and sacred folk songs for harmonic, rhythmic, and linear basis material. They continue Bell's fascination with Ives's compositions heard in *Miniature Diversions* and range in sound from clangorous multi-tonality to unadorned functional harmony. Neither piece proves wholly successful, though the later piece can be positively noted for its ambitious symphonic overlay, featuring fast outer entities and a scherzo-plus-slow movement center.

But the *Preludes'* pervasive orchestral sound and the persistent rhythms of its first two movements ultimately prove taxing. Revivals, while clearly a sincere work, suffers from loose construction, recondite textures, and non-distinctive unfolding. Bell's piano playing was commendable—not flashy, but brimming with musicality, intelligence, and desire to communicate. Tone quality was fetching and finger technique clean.

North Vermont: "All the Rage"

by David Cleary ©2005

WAREBROOK CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL. Music by Martin Boykan, Henry Cowell, Laurie San Martin, William Anderson, Curtis K. Hughes, Charles Wuorinen, William Pfaff, Jason Eckardt, Allen Anderson. Irasburg and Newport, VT. July 8-10, 2005

The northern Vermont towns of Irasburg and Newport saw several guests arrive during the second weekend in July. One, the remnants of tropical storm Cindy, was decidedly unwelcome. However, the host of performers and composers who made the trek were a major asset to this year's Warebrook Contemporary Music Festival.

The catchphrase for Friday evening's concert was "eclectic yet enjoyable." *Songlines* for mixed quartet is yet another winner from Martin Boykan's pen. While Atlantic Seaboard dissonant, it's graceful and well-spoken even at its most intense, mindful of color and texture and structurally sound. Henry Cowell's string trio *Seven Paragraphs* consists of just over a half-dozen tonally oriented character pieces—brief, but purposeful and chock-full of personality and craft. There was much to like about *Linea Negra* by Laurie San Martin as well. For solo marimba, it proves short and smart, cleverly building a solid ternary edifice from repeated octaves and fast unison material festooned with grittier elaborations. *Various Roses* shows William Anderson fracturing borrowed material ranging from the Rolling Stones to Schubert, rearranging it all into an economic little charmer for violin/guitar duo that combines pointillism and tonality without seeming daft.

Your reviewer has now listened to *Avoidance Tactics #1* for piano and percussion by Curtis K. Hughes on three separate occasions and would gladly hear it several times more. Redolent of Lee Hyla and others wowed by John Coltrane's ultra-raw oeuvre, it manages to shine with its own bright sense of self and persuasive feel for form and balance. Other items pleased less. *Spinoff* by Charles Wuorinen is succinctly described as Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* interpreted by a beatnik serialist. There's lots of enjoyable intensity in the writing for violin, contrabass, and congas, but less contrast and long-range shape. William Pfaff's moderately

dissonant *Coriolis* took the evening's prize for oddest scoring: alto flute, bass clarinet, guitar, and electric bass. Regrettably, the work's earnestly chugging feel comes across as square, and its closing pages, consisting of a bass cadenza and atmospheric coda, seem from another planet. And even though it sports two melodic ideas of personality, Erik Nielsen's heartfelt string quartet *That Silent Land* swings capriciously between tonal and polytonal idioms, unfolds confusingly, and lacks able architecture.

Saturday afternoon's event pleased even more. *Echoes' White Veil* for solo piano shows Jason Eckardt veering more uptown from Coltrane to Fernyhough's maximalism. This wonderfully dramatic and clangorous composition benefits enormously from a sophisticated use of binary contrasts ranging from small sections to large-scale overview. Originally written for viol consort, Boykan's *Motet* makes the jump surprisingly well to a soprano and mixed trio scoring. Lovely and expressive, it nicely mixes deft East Coast ensemble textures and cadenza-like cello writing. Allen Anderson's brief but ravishing soprano/piano item *At Half Past Three* is an affectionate birthday tribute to Boykan. There's plenty of variety within its warmly etched confines. While *Designs and Suite* by Ursula Mamlok are early serial 1960s violin and piano duets of brief duration, there's plenty of difference between them. The latter weds Weberian brevity and Wolpe-like intensity, while the former shows influence of Ralph Shapey's manic/depressive bleakness and anger. Both pleased greatly. Gunther Schuller's early *Fantasy for Violoncello Solo, Op. 19* is almost a bit too fanciful for its own good. But a closer look reveals that its wildly contrasting snippets show motivic relationships to each other. Had the piece also contained long-range clumping, it would have been an essential entity.

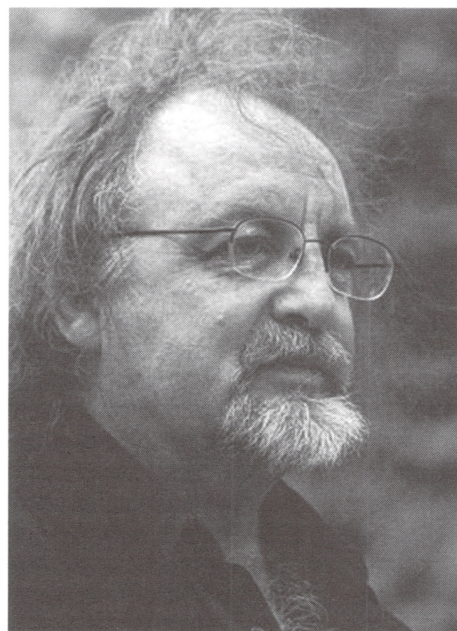
That evening's concert saw only strong selections. For flute and piano, Yehudi Wyner's *All the Rage* reverses the slow-fast arrangement commonly found in bipartite pieces. Its opener is a bouncy, jazzy scherzo which appends a surprisingly reflective coda, leading to a tragically anguished finale. Bizarre it may be, but it works. *Hyperblue*, a piano trio by David Rakowski, is even more enamored of scherzando writing; here, the composer surrounds a wistful centerpiece with active, kinetic bunkmates stuffed with profile and personality. Both this work and Wyner's revel in non-standard yet satisfying movement formats. Mamlok's wonderful mixed *Sextet* deftly organizes its material into palindromes and other sophisticated procedures while cloaking all this craft in music of fleet-footed, sparkling beauty. It's an

absolute must-hear. Sara Doncaster's *Supernatural Songs* for tenor, two sopranos, mezzo-soprano, and 13 players has been several years in the making—parts of it have appeared on past Warebrook installments—but it proved well worth the wait. A lengthy setting of Yeats's poetry, it's sizable not just in duration but also in scope and depth, every bit a match for the weighty text. Doncaster takes full advantage of the large forces, penning colorful music of much variety. Her writing for voices is superb, as is her handling of harmonies that find a compelling niche between tonality and atonality. In brief, this is a terrific piece deserving to be programmed many times over.

The closing concert on the following afternoon regrettably saw a minimal amount of essential fare. The best item was Elliott Carter's *Figment for Solo 'Cello*, which proved to be as showy as the aforementioned Schuller opus, but was tighter in its generative material and more structurally sound. Bravura dissonant writing dominates here, leavened with a few pensive moments. The highly conceptual *December 1952* by Earle Brown received a mellow, special-effects-heavy realization by a trio consisting of cellist and two percussionists. It was most enjoyable. For violin and cello pairing, Eric Sawyer's *Pas De Deux* is attractive enough if splashy to the point of being a bit facile



Jason Eckardt



Brian Fernyhough

and lacking a clear overall format. *Trio Op. 201* by Alan Hovhanness is certainly more ambitious than much of this composer's formulaic output. It consists of ethnic-sounding spun melodies containing a surprising amount of pitch bends and microtones, accompanied by spare *pizzicato ostinati*. Unfortunately, there's no contrasting music here to lend depth to this material. Ingolf Dahl's *Concerto a Tre* for

clarinet, violin, and cello is boilerplate Neoclassic stuff much too enamored of Stravinsky and Copland to demonstrate a compellingly unique voice. Despite carefully worked out canonic pitch textures, Robert Morris's guitar solo *Après Vous* is dry, arcane serial fare that shows no contrast at all to delineate its composer's promised variation structure. And *Tainted Thrive*, a piece for three cellos by Stefen Freund, is an earnest but forgettable piece of Bartók-steeped juvenilia.

No one can fault the performances encountered at the festival, though. Highlights included arresting solo efforts by pianist Marilyn Nonken (sporting flashy finger work and picture-perfect pacing in Eckardt's piece), marimbist Tim Feeney (featuring charismatic stage presence and a sound both round and intense in the San Martin), guitarist William Anderson (showing an aristocratically focused tone and spot-on technique in both hands in Morris's opus), and cellists Rafael Popper-Keizer and David Russell (demonstrating exquisite interpretive skills and pinpoint control in the Schuller and Carter respectively). There were also compelling presentations by the intelligently polished Concordia String Trio (Marcia Henry on violin, Leslie Perna on viola, Darry Dolezal on cello) and appealingly intense Primary Duo (Sarah Bob, piano and Aaron Trant, percussion); a brief but atmospheric cadenza offering by electric bassist Christopher Doncaster; and clairvoyantly sensitive chamber playing by all the soloists mentioned above as well as Damien Blattler and Mark Margolies (clarinets), Sarah Brady (flutes), Heidi Braun-Hill and David Fulmer (violins), and Brendan Kane (contrabass). Tenor Jon Garrison's gripping, vibrant singing was sensational in the Doncaster, as was Susan Davenney Wyner's evocatively musical conducting in both that work and the *Mamlok Sextet*.

When the Going Gets Tough

by Peter Kroll ©2005

Brian Fernyhough: Shadowtime. Nicolas Hodges, piano/reciter; Mats Scheidegger, guitar; Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart; Nieuw Ensemble Amsterdam, Jurjen Hempel, conductor. Rose Theater, Lincoln Center. July 22, 2005

Shadowtime was part of this year's Lincoln Center Festival and also was the North American Premiere of the work. It lasted 2 hours and 15 minutes without intermission and the going got harder and harder for me and many members of the audience. Fernyhough calls this a "thought opera." It is based on incidents in the life of philosopher Walter Benjamin whose writings were quite abstract. The major themes in his work as listed in the program notes are: the intertwined nature of history, time, transience, timelessness, language and melancholy. The libretto by poet Charles

Bernstein used these ideas and more. The music is regularly atonal, angular, dissonant and very fragmentary, though there were moments of great beauty and calm. Subtitles allowed for some possibility of following the text, but its intellectualized distance could not be overcome even with clearly humorous passages and word play. The performers were superb and committed, a special achievement for a complex composition and staging.

Interestingly, Fernyough writes that his opera "has failed...if the listener won't let go of a fixed notion of what constitutes musical form..." I believe that the audience including myself did do that. Still, that alone cannot be the basis of success in musical communication. Some emotional connection also must be achieved. Sadly, the work's overall tediousness could not be ignored. I wonder if a second hearing would allow me to appreciate it more, with or without fuller enjoyment. Given the state of recordings today, that is highly unlikely.

With My Heart in a Song

by Melanie Mitrano ©2005

MASTERS OF MODERN AMERICAN ART SONG. The Concert Songs of Tom Cipullo, David Del Tredici, and David Eddleman. Peter Norton Symphony Space, Leonard Nimoy Thalia. October 27, 2005.

In the interest of full disclosure, let me first divulge that I have been fortunate enough to work with all three of the distinguished composers on this concert. And while being careful to maintain my objectivity, the positive upshot is this: I know their music, I know it well, and I know what it takes to sing it that way.

Nonetheless, I don't want to focus on the vocal performances themselves. Suffice it to say that I was at times satisfied, and at times, not so much. But let me also reveal a long-standing bias: when I enter a concert hall to hear a vocal/piano concert and see a music stand in front of the piano, I already feel disheartened. I feel this way because I know there will be a necessary disconnect, a level not reached, a song unsold. And at the risk of some presumption, I have decided to issue nothing short of a fatwa to my fellow singers: memorize your music! Or at least some of it? This does not pertain to chamber music, naturally, but certainly to songs with piano. The audience is not there to watch a rehearsal – they want their money's worth. (And no, a song is just not the same when a singer reads from the music, no matter how skillfully done, and these ears will not even hear that argument.)

Now on to the program, which started famously with an abridged version of Tom Cipullo's *Another Reason Why I Don't Keep a Gun in the House*. This rich and varied cycle, on gritty poems by Billy Collins, was performed

adroitly by tenor Michael Polsker. His voice calls to mind the title of a Canadian Brass recording, "high, bright, light and clear." Mr. Polsker displayed excellent diction, which is paramount with texts of this depth. The highlights of the cycle were the darkly humorous



Tom Cipullo

"Flames," its dancing embers flickering with sarcasm, and the title song, a phobic frenzy culminating in musical dog barking.

Next was the world premiere of David Eddleman's cycle *Journey*, sung ardently by soprano Amy Synatzske. These six jewels range in style from the folksy "Dialogue" to "Wild Nights," which lives up to its name. "Middle Years" is an example of great musical story-telling. Here, Mr. Eddleman creates moods and colors that are almost palpable. The relentless ticking away of time marks "Into the Atmosphere," on a sobering poem by Frank Daykin, the expert pianist for Ms. Synatzske. The romantic, flowing "Come to Me in the Silence of the Night" contrasts sharply with the dramatic final song, "New Directions." This soundscape was so intense as to even affect temperature changes in the listener. Without question, David Eddleman has an ear for a great melody, something so deceptively simple, but so rare today.

The collection of songs by David Del Tredici started with the passionately hypnotic "In the Temple," and the powerfully tragic "Matthew Shepard." Baritone Timothy Hill sang both with clarity and conviction. Later, Michael Polsker offered "Children," and the unexpectedly jazzy "A Good Cry." David Del Tredici played his signature virtuosic piano parts expertly. Indeed, it is not enough to call these accompaniments, but rather "co-accompaniments," for they rival the beauty of the vocal lines and could almost stand on their own as solo piano works. Amy Synatzske rounded out the Del Tredici songs nicely, ending with the concluding aria from

Final Alice. In fact, all of the composer's songs are aria-like in nature, as they seem to occupy a plane somewhat above mere song. There is something operatic about them; one even hears an implied orchestration in the piano parts. Is it that the music is so well-crafted as to conjure up an array of timbres and colors? Or is it that Del Tredici knows his own instrument so well that he can push the limits of the piano, making it do more than we expect it to? I suspect it is a combination of both.

Michael Polsker next presented a lovely bouquet of songs by David Eddleman. Among the highlights were the charming "How Many Times Must I Love Thee, Dear?" and the wryly ironic "Lending Out Books," on a text by Hal Sirowitz, in attendance at the performance. Timothy Hill concluded the Eddleman set with his delightful "I Can't Be Talkin' of Love, Dear," accompanied with grace and sensitivity by Lucy Yates.

The evening closed with songs by Tom Cipullo, sung by Timothy Hill and Amy Synatzske, respectively. Like his former teacher, Mr. Cipullo's piano writing is consummate, and he plays with authority, musicality, and skill. The relentless "Subway" was performed with gusto, its Messiaen-like ending rippling out through time and space. The coquettish "Why I Wear My Hair Long" and the sharply witty "The Pocketbook" were a perfect finish to the night. Truly, this was an appealing and well-paced evening of song, by three composers who have every right to be called "Masters of Modern American Art Song."

dotted notes... from

Peter Kroll ©2005

In September at Fisher Hall, Leon Botstein/American Symphony Orchestra presented works which were part of the creation of an American symphonic music. The Roger Sessions *First Symphony* is lively and less craggy than his later pieces. I was struck by how much of it sounded like Bernstein at his bounciest. Randall Thompson's *Symphony No. 2* has a marvelous dancing second movement, and it would have helped if Botstein had been livelier in his interpretation. Ernest Bloch's *America* is big and concludes with an anthem about America as the beacon for a free world. Bloch asked the audience to join in and Botstein rehearsed us. I was impressed by how most caught onto the melody and rhythm after only two repetitions; clearly, this is a musically sophisticated crowd. Its applause was long and warm for this interesting program. The ASO played wonderfully throughout.

NYCO presented a powerful reading of



Jay Gottlieb

Richard Rodney Bennett's *The Mines of Sulphur*. Conductor George Manahan kept a firm grip on the potentially sprawling work and brought out both the intensity of its thickly textured dissonance and the drama of its angular vocal lines. The staging, lighting and costumes all contributed to this success. The vocal stand-outs were Worra, Raven, Paris, Duffin, McVeigh, Ledbetter, Nolen and West.

Leonard Lehrman ©2005

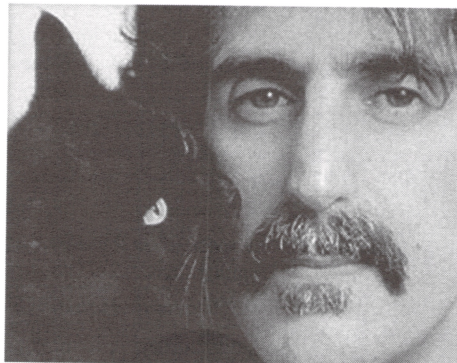
Jay Gottlieb, gifted pianist and composer, with whom I had the honor of sharing a composition prize in Fontainebleau in 1969, offered a piano recital at Mannes on July 23, 2005. Wished he had put some of his own compositions on the program, but I much enjoyed his unexcelled interpretations of works by composers he has known personally—Giacinto Scelsi (*Four Illustrations on the Metamorphosis of Vishnu*), Franco Donatoni (excerpts from *Françoise-Variationen*), Olivier Messiaen (two excerpts from larger works), Henri Dutilleux (a prelude), Luciano Berio (a suite), George Crumb (an excerpt from *Makrokosmos*, which Gottlieb dubbed “the Well-Tempered Clavier of our time”), and (fellow Harvard grad student) John Adams (*Phrygian Gates*). Ives appropriately opened and (with an encore) closed the program, well-titled “Contemporary Masterpieces,” a highlight of the International Keyboard Institute & Festival.

B.L.C. ©2005

Opus 21, the Michigan-based group, endorsed by William Bolcom and supported by several tuned-in foundations, again presented

a diverse program of new music in New York on May 3, 2005. At Merkin in its prior appearance here we grumbled about the too much standard jazz on the program and that the selections were mixed kind of oddly. But this concert of mostly world premieres at The Knitting Factory was a much more neatly integrated event. It had a genuine theme, a tribute to Motown Music, hardly a stretch for a group from Detroit. But with selections by the likes of Frank Zappa, Michael Daugherty, Eve Beglarian and Daniel Bernard Romain, this was no lightweight affair.

Zappa's *The Black Page, Nos. 1 & 2* (1976, 1988), arranged by Keith Horn, was a highly inventive and rhythmic study with a lot of gutsy solo turns by the full band of eight players. Beglarian's *Machaut in the Age of Motown* (2005) was pretty contemporary stuff, a weave of chromatic harmonies in its essentially bluesy lines. Mr. Daugherty's *Walk the Walk*, Mr. Romain's *I Never Meant to hurt You* (both 2005), and Scott McAllister's *Black Dog* (2002) had



Frank Zappa

relatively simpler ideas and could be enjoyed as mood music. But the percussive elements in Randolph Coleman's *dig it* (1993) and Richard Adams' *West Grand Boulevard* (2005) were just as fresh in style and metropolitan in feel as anything you'll hear today at the Blue Note or any top New York night spot. The former is a sort of dance of commerce, and the street tribute a beautifully crafted work with a clock-like opening and rhythmic elements that just explode into wild, rush-hour turmoil. Too bad that the unremitting bugaboo of ours, namely, the turning off of lights in the audience, just wouldn't allow us to interpret our scribbles and report anything but the names of Fred Hersch and Tom Knific. But we can tell you that the whole celebration ended on a head-bobbing upbeat note with Joe Hunter's *Lock It in your Pocket* (2005), making this master of Motown our choice for champ of the evening. Opus 21, conceived and managed by the engagingly youthful Richard Adams, lived up to its motto that “great music is without boundaries,” and, may we add, that the new wave known as crossover is definitely here to stay.

From south of the border comes a new face at the keyboard, one Patricia Garcia Torres making her New York debut (Weill Recital Hall, Nov. 20). This comely senora plays with a fine balance of grace and strength, perfect for making Prokofiev's *First Sonata* or Debussy's *L'Isle joyeuse* sound like the genuine classics



Patricia Garcia Torres

they are. The one very contemporary piece she handled with complete mastery was *Sonata II* by Federico Ibarra. One sensed an urgency in the composer's lines, not unlike that of Chopin's “*Revolutionary*” *Etude*, though one cannot claim the right to attribute the same sentiments to both composers. Sra. Torres embraced the work as if it had some special meaning for her. All of the selections on this mostly classical program were treated with the individuality of character that an exceptional pianist will discern by judging the composer's intentions more than just the notes.



Music with a Jewish Eccent? [sic]

by Leonard J. Lehrman ©2005

Jack Gottlieb: Funny, it doesn't sound Jewish: how Yiddish songs and synagogue melodies influenced Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood. Albany, NY: SUNY in association with the Library of Congress, 2004. 306 pp. incl. index and musical examples + 20 pp. of photos + a CD.

This is a warm, fuzzy, witty, fascinating, and funny book, which deserves a place in every self-respecting library with any size collection of Broadway and/or Jewish music. The product of decades of research through thousands of items, it comes with a CD of 50 tracks, including rarities only recently released (as part of large collections) of Judy Garland and Billie Holiday singing in Yiddish, with the greatest treasure of all saved for last: a 1965 recording of Leonard Bernstein (whose assistant Gottlieb was for many years) singing and playing Marc Blitzstein's "Zipperfly" as he remembered it (differing slightly from the manuscript version, published in *The Marc Blitzstein Songbook*, v.1, 1999, Boosey & Hawkes, p. 68-72).

The central thesis of the book, whose title comes from one of the delicious "lecture-entertainments" Gottlieb has been delivering around the country since 1972 (others being 'From Shtetl to Stage Door' and 'Sing Along: The Impact of Jewish Life on Tin Pan Alley'), is that if "not for composers and lyricists of Jewish origin, the touchstone classics of the American musical theater would be nonexistent." (p.1) This has, of course, been an open secret, ever since the Episcopalian Cole Porter (who, Gottlieb speculates, may have been a "bit of both" anti-Semite and "philo-Semite") told Richard Rodgers and E.Y. "Yip" Harburg that the secret to writing Broadway hits was, he had discovered, to "write Jewish music."

But Gottlieb goes further, and deeper, asserting that "certain melodic fragments tend to cluster into family groupings," that "these groupings have ethnic or allegiant connotations," and that "latent snatches of song incubating in the subconscious later take wing in the creative process." (pp. xv, 174) He finds these in Weill, Offenbach, Berlin, Arlen, Fain, and of course Bernstein, among dozens of others.

Theoretically, he builds on fairly solid ground, demonstrating the identifiably Jewish character of melodic patterns found in liturgical modes: the Adonai Malakh mode (modified Mixolydian, or major with lowered seventh and, in the upper extension, lowered third); the Magen Avot mode (natural minor or

Aeolian); and the Ahava Raba mode, also known as Phrögisch (Freygish in transliterated Yiddish) or modified Phrygian, or harmonic minor centering on the dominant, with lowered second and raised third, creating an augmented second interval characteristic of many exotically eastern European and Arabic modes, not to mention—which Gottlieb does not—Moorish and Spanish).

A fourth mode, the so-called Ukrainian Dorian (a minor scale with a raised fourth, also known as Magyar, Hijaz, Aulos, traditional Mi shebeirach and Av horachamim) is treated separately, in part because of the enharmonic closeness that the raised fourth bears to the lowered fifth, characteristic of blues. And here, in this ambiguous area, is where the writing and speculation become just a bit fuzzy or, "as they say in pidgin Yiddish, 'farfetscht.'" (p. 167)

Gottlieb correctly takes Jeffrey Melnick to task for the implicit anti-Semitism in his book *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and Popular Song* (Harvard University Press, 1999), faulting it for not being as inclusive or as fair-minded as the same author's 1994 Harvard doctoral thesis, *Ancestors and Relatives: The Uncanny Relationship of African Americans and Jews*. But he leaves himself open to a similar comparison between his book and his own 1964 University of Illinois doctoral thesis, *The Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Study of Melodic Manipulations*.

In his thesis, Gottlieb cited what he called an "Urmotiv" of a descending sixth followed by a descending second in Bernstein's music, and quoted Bernstein himself, who "suggested that the origin of this particular motive comes from the deep impression made upon him by the 'Lullaby' from Marc Blitzstein's opera *No For An Answer* (1937-1941). In my 1977 Cornell doctoral thesis on Bernstein's *Serenade*, I speculated that Bernstein might more likely have been thinking of another song from the same opera, "Secret Singing," in which the same melodic pattern occurs even more prominently, several times. (These songs appear side by side in *The Marc Blitzstein Songbook*, vol. 2, 2001, Boosey & Hawkes, pp. 26-38.)

In this new book, however, Gottlieb completely ignores the previously acknowledged Blitzstein influence on Bernstein, except for "Zipperfly," which he speculates is in a "Jewish idiom" (p.223 n91) based on davening* (though the black shoeshine boy who intones "Now I lay me down to sleep" and envisions "Easter Sunday" in the song was not considered exactly Jewish enough to be included in the Blitzstein lecture-recital Helene Williams and I gave November 9, 2004 at the Center for Jew-

ish History). Instead, Gottlieb now calls the descending sixth followed by descending second, which can be clearly heard in at least half a dozen Bernstein works, an "extension" of a "4th to a 6th," thus relating it to a cadential High Holiday motive of descending fourth followed by descending second.

This is truly manipulation, and question-begging, by a disciple of the master (Bernstein) whose "Infinite Variety of Music" lecture once demonstrated how many different ideas could all be traced to the same four notes of "How Dry I Am." "Outlandish" is the appropriate term of description here, as it is for Gottlieb's suggestion "that triple meter connotes Trinitarian concepts of Christianity, while duple meter is more symbolic of the Jewish one-on-one relationship of man and God." (p.33) Such statements are no less "farcical" than the observation (p.176) that "A Yiddishe Momme" begins with the same seven notes as Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries"!

Since Gottlieb has, in the usual authorial fashion, admitted "responsibility for... proff-reading" [sic] (p. 266), and since he gleefully points out "blatant bloopers" (p. 37) in others' works, a few glaring errors must be laid at his door, in hopes of correction in future editions. His Russian and Ukrainian transliterations (pp. 75, 88-9) are missing hyphens, rendering words as a series of nonsense syllables; and a German text by Brecht has been inadvertently Yiddishized ("Der erste" appears as "Der ershte," among other errors, p. 288). Abel Meeropol's classic "Apples, Peaches and Cherries" was never called "Pineapples, Peaches and Cherries" (p. 72). Examples 7-28a and 8-1c (pp. 135 & 145) each contain a measure with one too many beats, and the upper tetrachord of Ex. 5-27 (p.100) has one too many notes. Ex. 9-26b (p.172) contains an extraneous tie, ex. 5-28b (p. 100) an extraneous flag. The ninth note of ex. 12-14c (p.209) should be a D, not a Bb. And Bernstein's *Kaddish Symphony* was #3, not #2 (p.184 n5; corrected elsewhere).

Blitzstein's *Idiots First* is an opera, not a "theater piece" (p. 217). His "Gus and Sadie Love Song" could also have been cited as a descendant from "Khosn kale mazeltov," much more so than "Shine On, Harvest Moon," whose connection with the Yiddish wedding melody is stated but not convincingly demonstrated, at least for me. And the "psychologist" quoted by James Fuld and in turn by Gottlieb (p.32), Dr. Nathaniel S. Lehrman, is actually a psychiatrist (as well as my father).

But these are all small potatoes in a rich broth that consistently entertains at least as

Continued on page 22

SpeakingOUT

LETTERS

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing to ask you to PLEASE stop sending me the New Music Connoisseur.

I'm sick of seeing the same old faces time after time... I appreciate your efforts on behalf of new music. I just wish it was more all-embracing.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Anon [editor's option]

In apprising our readers of our new survey questionnaire, we made it clear that all responses would remain completely secure. We want to hold to that promise; however, we see no reason to keep general comments under lock and key. Why not publish some of those even while the survey is ongoing? Here are a few of the general comments received thus far:

"Think you guys make a brave, terrific effort to do the right thing by new music."

"NMC definitely needs an image makeover 'in a big way.' The basic layout and 'look' is strictly amateur and lo-budge..."

"As you might guess, I think your last issue [v12#4] had a near ideal balance of content. Since I don't live in New York, I don't know how representative it was, but it was satisfying."

"I couldn't be happier with NMC. Without it, there would be a huge gap in music reporting of all kinds."

"If this magazine is to have any lasting value, it needs to avoid the popular music categories so thoroughly covered by the mass media. The main function of the magazine should be to recognize all performers and creators who are ignored by that media."

And there have been suggestions regarding additional features:

"Some technical articles or interviews with performers and conductors (how to write for strange instruments, common mistakes to avoid, useful tips)."

"More info about composers' organizations and their activities around the world."

"A magazine can only do so much. Inasmuch as NMC provides a track record of the goings on about town, I find it enormously useful. Inquiry: Is there a reason there is small coverage of the Composition programs at the various New York music schools?"

"Reviews of anything relevant on television."

"More recordings – definitely!"

"Maybe more reviews, especially of recordings, but shorter ones to accommodate the size of the magazine – maybe separate sections for the New York reviews and other reviews."

"A calendar of upcoming new music concerts. This could be updated periodically on your web page independently of the print edition."

"Reviews from other parts of the country."

"More articles/essays on a more scholarly level. Reviews are fine, but it would be great if every issue included at least one 'serious' article/essay. It could be about a particular composer, or an in-depth analysis of a piece, or about a particular theoretical or compositional technique or topic, etc. As it now stands NMC is very 'lightweight.' I'm not saying it should attempt to be Perspectives of New Music or anything, but some real substance would go a long way."

Thank you for your thoughts.

EDITORIAL

How to Publish a New-Music Zine

No, this is not a manifesto. If your reaction to such a how-to title is, "Boy, that's arrogant and patronizing," we could not agree with you more. If you consider such a presumption irrelevant to your particular interests, you may be absolutely right. The point of this op-ed piece is that we are constantly pitched to about buying this or that line of products, anything from "the great diet plan" to the state of the art carpet cleaner ("Get two if you call now!"), and we all know right off that it's mostly baloney. Truth can be refreshing. So it comes as no surprise (sort of) that one of our readers (SEE LETTER #1) recently notified us to stop sending copies of *NMC* to them [sic] because the writer was "sick of seeing the same old faces time after time." Was the reader telling us that we were simply selling certain people and therefore didn't

know how to publish a new-music magazine? Well, solid and specific opinions or observations would have been much more helpful, as we see on those questionnaires we have been sending around. Readers are offering honest suggestions as to how to improve our coverage and appearance. Those comments are informative and valuable, and they will be fully published (anonymously) in a forthcoming issue, as well as on our web site. A few are posted here.

It is our impression—an arguable one, to be sure—that the complaining reader was not telling the truth, that what mattered most was the lack of coverage of their [sic] own musical activities. In fact, a positive review of a recent performance involving this person's work came to our attention, and we found ourselves in a bit of a quandary. The complainer had made it quite clear that further communication of any sort would not be necessary. But we do publish reviews of music from many sources, regardless of what that letter writer may think. So should we publish Dave Cleary's review just to disprove the idea that we hold grudges? We opted for that choice over cranky acceptance of the literal message, and some comments do now appear on our web site. We don't wish, in the words of Whitman, to sound our "barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world" either to complain or to show how magnanimous we are. It is simply a matter of common sense, the right thing to do if we call *NMC* a fair publication.

So let's get back to that notion. We should have the right to share some ideas with you without any hint of superciliousness. The big question our anonymous (by our choice) complainer opens up is whether we can survive by telling the truth, which, of course, includes honest opinion. It may mean that a certain piece of music by Michel de Angelis is truly awful when we are well aware of his loyal support over the years. At the opposite end of the coin is the non-subscribing Mary Holliday who tells us to get lost but composes a work that is quite lovely and winning. The issue is whether we can remain above the masses and perhaps fly in the face of good marketing principles. It's a matter of genuine journalism vs. business as usual, i.e., an enterprise that purports to bring the truth to our door vs. the sphere of activity in which good relations are paramount to success. It's not unlike the dilemma of Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* or any other analogous treatise appearing in the classic literature, not to mention the real-life turmoil created recently by controversial media figures.

Can we remain aboveboard under such circumstances? Admittedly, this publisher, as a writer, criticized composers and performers when there appeared to be a certain unwar-

ranted arrogance at play, such as the title, *A Portrait of William Blake*, when our best instincts tell us Blake was an entity so vast in scope and in achievement that no 20-minute opus could do him justice with a title like that. We had otherwise great respect for that composer and allowed him to air his grievances in a subsequent issue of *NMC*. And, yes, we have criticized the music of supporters and did not feel regret when renewals were not forthcoming. We have on several occasions, in fact, returned contributions when we sensed the contributor was eager for control of our pages. No, we haven't been perfect in our quest to serve as a model for consistently good constructive criticism. One must understand that the writer here is under great pressure to appear at such and such event and give personal impressions good or bad, as the chips fall. Hence the need to turn over more critical assignments to the other fine writers we are fortunate to have; our friends out there need to accept this. We are primarily a journal and secondarily a business enterprise that needs to survive, but only on purely solid grounds. BLC



SOME WITTICISMS IN THE FORM OF THE ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S CRYPTOGRAM PUZZLES:

1. There are two golden rules for an orchestra: Start together and finish together. The public doesn't give a damn what goes on in between. (Sir Thomas Beecham)
2. A good composer is slowly discovered—a bad composer is slowly found out. (Ernest Newman)
3. If you can walk you can dance. If you can talk you can sing. (Zimbabwe proverb)
4. Jazz will endure just as long as people hear it through their feet instead of their brains. (John Philip Sousa)
5. A good composer does not imitate; he steals. (Igor Stravinsky)
6. It is surely not surprising that one of the greatest mathematicians of our time should be able to count, 'one, two, three, four...' (Igor Stravinsky... on hearing of Einstein's touted rhythmic sense)
7. Composers shouldn't think too much—it interferes with their plagiarism. (Howard Dietz)
8. Going to war without the French is like going hunting without your accordion (Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf)
[Editor's note: The Scots go to war with bagpipes blaring]

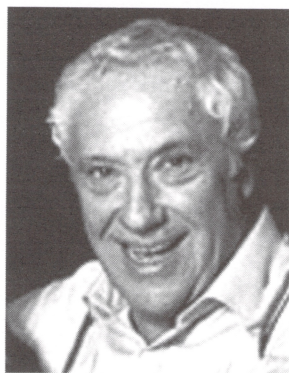
REMINDER!!

Always check the top line of your address label (back page) to see your subscription status.

RECENTLY DEPARTED

Arnold Weinstein, 78, Poet and Collaborator on Operas

Arnold Weinstein, the poet, playwright and librettist who wrote works performed on and off Broadway, taught playwriting at Yale and Columbia, and collaborated with composers from William Bolcom to Henry Threadgill to Philip Glass, died Sunday [Sept. 4] at Cabrini Hospice in Manhattan.



Arnold Weinstein

The cause was liver cancer, said his niece, Lisa Hamm.

A self-described "theater poet," he was perhaps best known in recent years for his collaboration with Mr. Bolcom, which included four volumes of cabaret songs as well as the operas *McTeague*, *A View From the Bridge* (with Arthur Miller) and *A Wedding* (with Robert Altman). (Obituary by Anne Midgette, *NY Times*, September 6, 2005) [More on our web site]

Raoul Ronson, Publisher, 74

Raoul Ronson died in New York City on October 1, 2005. He was the founder and director of Seesaw Music Corp., which published over 4,000 works by American composers during the 41 years of its existence. He thereby created the means by which so many composers could make their music available to the public. His network of music dealers extended throughout the United States, and beyond that to Europe and Asia. Seesaw Music served the cause of American music with the utmost effectiveness, providing professional and reliable service. He was also generous with down-to-earth advice for composers, putting his knowledge and information at the disposal of those who were seeking to make careers in a difficult field. Raoul Ronson and Seesaw Music performed an important function in the world of contemporary music. His presence will be missed. (Leo Kraft)

Elizabeth Parcells, Coloratura, 54

Coloratura soprano Elizabeth Parcells (12/28/51-12/29/05) of Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, was taken from us by colon cancer, with which she struggled valiantly for 2 1/2 years. But at <www.elizabethparcells.com> she has left a legacy that continues to grow, as more of her recordings and recorded performances continue to be added to it, along with

memories of the hundreds of listeners, fans, friends, and colleagues she touched throughout Europe and the U.S. Her voice was as angelic and yet as humanly beautiful as could be found on earth. Her specialties were Mozart, bel canto, and works with guitar, but the breadth of her new music repertoire was also staggering, including works by Stravinsky, Milhaud, Rodrigo, Kukuck, Lennox Berkeley, Francis Burt, Henze, Davies, Jolas, Farkas, Jacques Bondon, Musgrave, Pinkham, Leisner, Martino, as well as (written for her) Robert Selig (*Survival Fragments*), Leonard Lehrman (*The Cautious Struggle*, *Spiele*, *Answer to a Child's Question*, *E.G.: A Musical Portrait of Emma Goldman*), Joseph Pehrson (*Vocalise*, *Lewis Carroll Songs*), and Lydia Kavina (*In the Whims of the Wind*). (Leonard Lehrman & Joseph Pehrson)



Elizabeth Parcells

ERRATA

The mention of composer Bruce Adolphe on our last issue's cover was incorrect. The composer of the "newly vindicated opera" was Lee Hoiby. Our apologies to Mr. Hoiby. Leonard Lehrman, expert on the music of Marc Blitzstein, observes that Joseph Pehrson's review of The Marc Blitzstein Centennial concert at the People's Voice Cafe, March 5, 2005, mentioned the Workmen's Circle Chorus, but neglected to cite the other two choruses that participated in far greater numbers: the Solidarity Singers of the New Jersey Industrial Union Council and the Metropolitan Philharmonic Chorus.



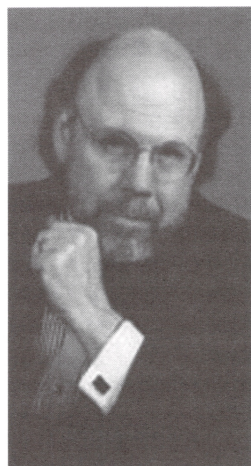
recordings

Yule: Enjoy this CD!

by David Cleary ©2005

Jackson Berkey: Harpsichord Carols SDG CD 011 (51:16)

All but one of the twelve tracks on this CD by Omaha resident and former Mannheim Steamroller keyboardist Jackson Berkey prove to be selections that are equal parts arrangement and fantasia on old Christmas standards.



Jackson Berkey

In addition to supplying harmonizations that are anything but typical (often employing off-kilter meters at cross purposes with the original), Berkey cleverly deconstructs the tunes, spinning out material based on motifs or somewhat longer segments. Stylistically, these entries are an eclectic fusion of classical, pop, and jazz idioms which fortunately don't come across as jarring or inconsistent. Tonal, polytonal, and cluster-derived verticals coexist surprisingly well here. Some stuffy sorts may have their wince factor kick in when hearing this release, but your reviewer finds it attractive, charming, and tasteful. Most of these items are scored for a duet of harpsichord and harp, though a few call for solo forces encompassing piano or one of the above two instruments. Both Berkey (keyboards) and Kathy Bundock Moore (harp) perform with skill and sensitivity. Sound and editing are exemplary. Surely there's no other holiday release quite like it.

Best Flute Forward

by Peter Kroll ©2005

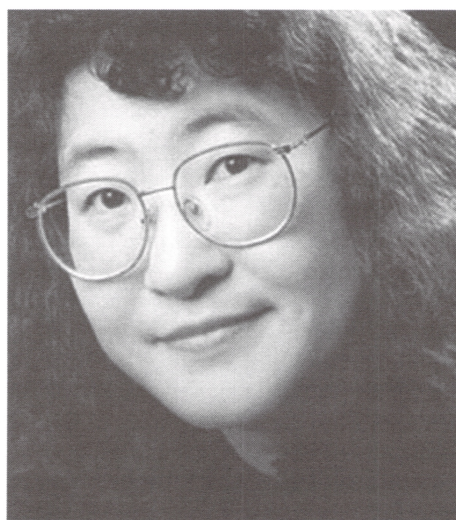
THE PIED PIPER FANTASY: Chen Yi: *The Golden Flute for Flute and Orchestra* • John Corigliano: *The Pied Piper Fantasy* • Katherine Hoover: *Medieval Suite*. Alexa Still, flute; James Sedares/ New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Koch Intl. KIC-CD-7566 (73:07)

In actuality, this is a CD of concertos. In all three pieces, the flute clearly dominates. Hoover says that her suite was originally for flute and piano and was "inspired by charac-

ters and events described in Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*. The 19-minute work quotes from medieval sources and develops them for this century. Well-crafted, the piece at first seems mainly quite enjoyable, no small achievement. However, further listening demonstrates a greater range of feelings than first apparent, at least in the slower movements. The "Black Knight" movement is haunting and even frightening at points, appropriate to its namesake. The movement on the young princess begins with a delicate theme for flute softly backed by the orchestra. Violins enter to enhance the delicacy, which continues throughout the section. The work gives flautist Still, who is from New Zealand, a wonderful chance to show her ability to convey the composition's subtleties.

The Corigliano piece is probably the best known of the three on this CD. It was written for James Galway and has been recorded by him. In performance, the hall is in darkness and stage lights come up; the soloist is dressed like a piper and has children both come onto the stage from the audience when he first beckons and then follow him out of the hall at the work's conclusion.

Removed from its staging, the piece loses some of its impact but not as much as might be expected. This performance fully captures all of the work's interesting and inventive moments: the glory of the rising sun, the haunt-



Chen Yi

ing tune given to the Piper, his battle with and victory over the rats, the pompousness of the townsfolk, his capture of their children and the emptiness of the ending after the children have left the hall. Corigliano has written



John Corigliano

a modern classic with a refined compositional skill hardly noticeable but very effective. Still and the orchestra outdo themselves in their execution and ensemble work. I was especially struck by Still's ability to capture the many moments of tenderness found in the piece.

Chen Yi's composition poses some paradoxes. She writes that she "decided to compose a flute concerto using a western flute to speak the language of Chinese wind instruments such as the dizi made from bamboo and the xun made from clay...." She also utilizes some of the compositional modes found in "traditional Chinese bamboo flute performance." In fact the 19-minute work's only theme is in the "initial three measure phrase, which is melodic material drawn from a Chinese folk tune...." The opening movement (whose sections are played without break) makes engaging use of colors and harmonies along with inventive thematic development with and in the orchestra. The second movement, where Chen attempts to capture the "mysterious and dreamy voice" of the xun, is captivating. The concluding section especially allows for Still again to demonstrate her marvelous virtuosity, all in the service of the music. This movement rises to an almost war-like intensity, with powerful orchestral contributions. A coda for the solo flute is mournful, a mood consistent with the conclusion of a war. Yet, there is a brief lively fanfare at the very end of the piece. Let me say that the work stimulates both the mind and the heart. The paradox I spoke of before relates to the composer's need to use a Western instrument to speak the language of a different but related instrument. I wonder why this is so. That is, why not write a flute concerto by itself using Chinese compositional and instrumental techniques? Or, why not write a concerto for

xun and orchestra? Certainly that would be appealing to at least some Western listeners most of whom, I assume, have never heard a xun or dizi? I would be interested in hearing what motivated Chen to write what she did. Is it a form of nostalgia for her homeland? Some type of political correctness? I note that I listened to the work before I read the program notes and greatly enjoyed it even if I have no idea how a xun sounds. It is just good music and that is all it needs.

Kudos again to the remarkable Alexa Still and to Sedares and the New Zealand Symphony who are admirable supporters in each composition. The disk is generous in the amount of music it provides, another plus.

"Echoes" of the Past

by Chris Auerbach-Brown ©2005

"Violeta Dinescu • Piano Works."
Werner Barho, pianist. **Altri Suoni,**
AS 042; released 2000/01 (74:18)
(URL=www.altrisuoni.com)

Violeta Dinescu is a composer who initially gives the impression of being tied to the historical tradition that is classical music. Born in Romania in 1953, she graduated from the Ciprian Porumbescu Conservatory in Bucharest in 1977, with degrees in composition, piano and pedagogy. She eventually moved to Germany in 1982, and since then



Violeta Dinescu

has enjoyed a considerable degree of success, mostly in Europe. Her earlier compositions often use traditional elements of Romantic-era pianism: elaborate melodies in the right hand with left hand accompaniments; robust, sweeping gestures; heavy piano writing, utilizing the entire range of the instrument. However, Ms. Dinescu's personal style becomes increasingly evident in her later works, which use a colorful variety of contemporary piano techniques. Werner Barho performs Dinescu's

music intelligently and with sensitivity, and gives clear, meaningful interpretations throughout.

The retrospective approach is obvious in the first opus on the CD, *Suita* from 1973. A work from her student days, it displays solid compositional skill and falls squarely into the category just described, with a hint of sarcasm not unlike that of Shostakovich and Bartók. There are some nice moments, but overall I found the music to be average, mostly because the harmonies used weren't overly expressive. Dinescu's next student piece, *Con Variazioni* (1974) stretches her harmonic language by adding tonality to the mix. The work starts in the "white-note" tonal realm, and then devolves slowly into an atonal language, with tonal moments recurring throughout. This addition is interesting, but the lack of variation in her "traditional" approach to her piano writing is a weak point of the piece. I also heard altered quotations from other piano compositions, most notably from the finale of *Gaspard de la Nuit* by Ravel; perhaps the addition of tonality and quotations of other music is a debt to Alfred Schnittke. The hinting at tonal ideas and usage of changed passages from other pieces reminded me of memories, or rather, of my inability to remember my experiences exactly as they happened, without bias. This aspect was particularly interesting and moving.

Echoes I and *Echoes II* (1980) take a contemporary approach to writing for the piano, one that utilizes the instrument more completely and effectively. These selections let the piano resonate, taking full advantage of the instrument's ability to hang onto sounds for longer periods of time. She occasionally uses extended techniques like stroking, smacking, scratching, and plucking the piano strings, often with great effect. Dinescu also employs mixtures of tonal and atonal moments which give expression and range to her harmonic palette. *Torre di Si* (1994) utilizes a similar approach, but stays more quiet and introspective than the other two pieces. Both "Echoes" are strong examples of contemporary piano writing, and although at first I didn't like their seeming lack of overall shape, I gained more respect for them on subsequent listens.

Dies Diem Doce (1987) is a fitting finale of the CD, and again makes use of resonance,



David Dzubay

although in an entirely different fashion than previously. This composition is big, meaty, bombastic, virtuosic, and very aggressive. It is a regurgitation (in the best sense) of "Les Jeux d'Eau de Villa d'Este" from *Année de Pèlerinages* by Liszt. The CD cleverly inserts Liszt's music immediately before this piece, leaving listeners to find the connections between these two works.

Visit to Some "Eclectic Fare"

by David Cleary ©2005

CHAMBER MUSIC OF DAVID DZUBAY.
Life Songs, Book I: dancesing in a green bay; Life Songs, Book II: Singing the Sun; Threnody for string quartet; Capriccio.
Innova 588. (54:21)

Indiana University faculty member David Dzubay presents examples of his chamber output here, with special emphasis on voice collections with ensemble backing.

Dzubay's oeuvre is post-modernist, demonstrating harmonies that are relatively dissonant—if scalar—that aren't shy about wandering into more tonal realms. There's modest use of special effects such as massed whispered speech and string glissandi on harmonics. It's eclectic fare, if not to the extent of two of his primary teachers, Donald Erb and Lukas Foss. The two largest items here are drawn from a series of song cycles scored for singer (or in the case of one example, singer and reciter) backed by Pierrot ensemble plus percussion. *Life Songs, Book I: dancesing in a green bay* sets poems by e.e. cummings, while a host of poets ranging from Blake to Sappho furnish texts for *Life Songs, Book II: Singing the Sun*. Both are attractive entities, containing especially felicitous instrumental accompaniments that never inundate the soloist.

Threnody for string quartet deconstructs Josquin des Prez's *Mille Regrets*, interweaving

Continued on page 22

techniques; "Webern circa 2005," by longtime Webern commentator Donivan Johnson, brought one up-to-date on the latest Webern scholarship and offered some quite enlightened approaches to both the study of and hearing of Webern's music. A quite innovative presentation!

The afternoon brought a performance by a visiting ensemble, the Valdosta State University Faculty Ensemble performing a wide variety of pieces. Squeezed in before the next SCI session was a master class by well-known American composer Libby Larsen, who supplied comments and coaching on contemporary pieces, including several of her own being prepared by UNCG student musicians. This was a spirited session and an excellent contrast to other SCI activities. But the remaining paper sessions after this proved to be rather pedestrian. Another concert for small chamber ensembles followed before an evening concert featuring the UNCG University Choir and Chamber Singers. I was unable to attend this program, but it included composers Daniel Nass, Jonathan Santore, Eddie Bass, Libby Larsen, and, Judith Shatin. By comments made to me later, it appeared to conclude a day of fine performances with several compositional highlights.

Saturday again started very early with a concert featuring all works recently released on the new SCI Performers' CD Series with Jeri-Mae G. Astolfi on piano. Another concert of small chamber ensembles immediately fol-

lowed. A nice contrast came next with a paper session presenting "Voice-Leading and Harmonic Background in Toru Takemitsu's *A Bird Came Down the Walk*," by Bruce Reiprich, and "In the Hand of the Frau: Elizabeth Austin's *Frauenliebe und—leben* in Comparison to Schumann's Setting," Michael Slayton, presenter, with Mei Zhong, Jerome Reed, performers and Elizabeth Austin, respondent. Both of these presentations were first rate. Other concerts of electronic, computer works and a return of the Thelema Trio with all SCI composers ensued in another truly enjoyable musical happening. Before the final evening's event, there was a great banquet complete with an engaging and wonderfully presented keynote address by guest composer Libby Larsen, who commented on the current concert scene for composers, offering many insights for all of us to contemplate. The UNCG Symphony Orchestra then presented compositions by Libby Larsen, Dorothy Hindman, Ellsworth Milburn and this writer-reporter. The whole thing went very well, and I can offer nothing but praise for the care with which my piece was played.

One can conclude that SCI continues to flourish with a variety of styles, performance formats and compositional ideas that now reflect the truly great diversity in the nation and the world (SCI has international members). As the organization goes into its 40th year, it has moved ahead substantially since I joined it in 1973. Congratulations should be extended to the SCI membership, to the conference host,

UNCG, and to the many people who labored to organize the conference. Overall, it was a most successful affair, and UNCG can certainly take pride in having contributed to a long list of successful SCI national conferences.



Book Review... continued from page 17

much as it enlightens, and for which we are all the richer. One last gem, to demonstrate the pricelessness of the materials contained herein: an unfinished Irving Berlin lyric for Fanny Brice called "Yiddisha Eskimo": "Living in a house of snow without a steeple, I'm one of God's frozen people." (p.110)

* *Prayer in the traditional Jewish manner, pronounced DAH-ven-ning.*



ANNOUNCEMENT: NMC is changing its policy of accepting CDs and DVDs by mail. Due to reduced storage capacity, we request that you e-mail us information regarding your new releases. (Please, no faxes or letters.) If the recording(s) fall(s) within our parameters, we will ask you to send items directly to assigned reviewers. We think this policy will lead to more and better coverage since it will work similarly to our assigning of live events via e-mail. Thank you for your cooperation.

Publisher@newmusicon.org

RECORDINGS... continued from page 21

snatches of this chanson with decidedly non-modal contrasting material, the whole running like quicksilver from moment to moment. The violin and piano duet *Capriccio* harnesses its equally malleable moods, cast in alternating duo sections and violin cadenzas, to loosely articulated variation thinking. Both pieces seem a bit scattered, however. And while Dzubay's writing is clever and polished, there is a naggingly facile feel to a fair bit of the music here.

Performances are generally strong. Members of the group Voices of Change (Jo Boatright, artistic director) give this challenging fare excellently. The two singers are varying degrees of okay. Mezzo-soprano Heidi Dietrich Klein has a focused and lucid tone quality, commendable vocal flexibility, and decent diction. Although she possesses solid technique, good pitch sense, and respectable enunciation, Christine Schadeberg's soprano instrument lacks sonic focus and labors under a wobbly vibrato. Dzubay conducts both song cycles evocatively. Editing and sound are fine.



Recent Releases

[This list cites CD's by NMC subscribers, associates, advertisers (subject's surname in upper case; instrument indicated if performer; labels advertising in NMC in bold). Occasionally, a CD is re-listed if we recognize a new "NMC-er" in it not previously cited. Album titles/series names are single-quoted, underlined (and italicized if also the title of a selection). "Others"=other composers; "more"=more of same composer; "+" = each unnamed work; "Pfmd"=Performed by...; "other pfms"=other performers..]

- ANDERSON, Beth: (See MITRANO)
- ASHLEY, Robert: 'Perfect Lives, an opera for television.' Lovely Music. LCVD-4917 [2 DVDs]
- BEERMAN, Burton (also clarinet): 'Beerman Unplugged, almost.' Night Scenes; Voices +++ Capstone, CPS-8747
- BROWN, Timothy J.: String Quartet #2 (The Desolation of the Soul); 10 more, on 'The Music of ...' Capstone CPS-8750
- CARTER, Elliott: 'The Music of... Vol. 6.' Violin Concerto; Four Lauds; Holiday Overture. Rolf Schulte, vn.; other pfms. Bridge

- FIELDS, Matthew: 'Sages of Chelm.' P. Ellison, c'bass. Centaur CRC 2699
- FOX, Jim (Cold Blue Music): 2 new CDs w/ music by D. Lentz and Chas Smith
- HICKEY, Sean: 'Left at the Fork in the Road.' Naxos 8.559279
- MITRANO, Melanie (soprano): 'Songs in Transition – An American Expedition,' by Anderson, Mitrano, Pritsker, Cipullo, Del Tredici, 4 others. Capstone CPS-8756
- PRITSKER, Gene: (See MITRANO)
- SCHOBBER, Brian: 'Manhattan Impromptus.' Stephen Gosling, piano. Capstone CPS-8749
- STAROBIN, David: (guitar) in Forlane, 'The Music of David Liptak.' ++ Dinosaur Annex Music Ens., Scott Wheeler, cond. Bridge 9167
- WILSON, Richard: Three Painters, Others. Bridge 9152
- ZAIMONT, Judith Lang: Parable: A Tale of Abram and Isaac. Milken Archive

● In-house ○ Not in-house (keys for staff use only)



'Music from the Inside Out,' a portrait of the Philadelphia Orchestra

by B.L.C. ©2005

Daniel Anker, director; Tom Hurwitz, photographer. Auditioned October 1, 2005.

"What is Music?" That's the question this documentary film opens with. Since its principal characters are real musicians and not professional actors you might expect some profound answers, but what you get is a mishmash of responses, from "What a Question!" to "Hmmm, it's a commitment for life." [Note that all of the quotes we cite here are approximations.] Mr. Anker's intent, no doubt, was to elicit comments that come from deep within these extraordinary musicians, and the "Inside" element of "Inside Out" is what makes this a fascinating film, even if we found the "Out" a lot less convincing.

Mr. Anker is a film director, not a musician, and that alone somehow lifts the curtain between him and his "actors." He's not there to chat about last night's concert or the new union contract or the conductor's beat. He opts for spontaneity over design, always trying to catch his actors unawares. Exemplary camera work is necessary here to create the impression of men and women enrapt in their art. And since they are all different in terms of life experience and cultural derivation, we should not expect responses that can be pigeonholed and made to fit a predetermined script. So much the better.

We meet a musician who finds that riding his motorcycle over curvy roads helps him through the twists and turns of complex music scores. Violinist and sometimes painter Judy Geist attributes her feelings for music to a form of synesthesia common to other musicians, the sensation of colors produced by certain sounds. Still another member, hornist Adam Unsworth, has discovered that training for and running in the local marathon builds in him a determination to perform at his best every single day no matter how low he may feel.

Concertmaster David Kim gets a good chunk of footage. He tells of how his Korean mother drove him to become a great concert violinist. But she died when he was 14 and his "light" went out for a long time. He could not find solo performance opportunities in the big cities and was about to give it all up when he saw a movie that inspired him to succeed; he then went on to join the Philadelphia Orchestra and become more than a player—he's an organizational linchpin.

It's understandable why Anker is not

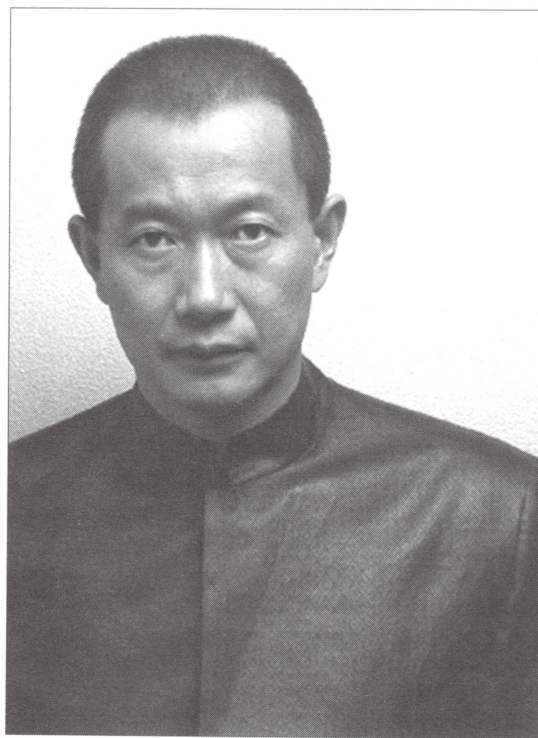
interested in cataloging the music being heard on screen or the technical aspects of music. But some of the scenes are put in for obvious reasons. Too much classical music might lose an average audience, so he gives us a clip of fiddlers Jason and Zachary DePue (presumably brothers) joining a bluegrass ensemble and having some fun. Or of trombonist, Nitzan Haroz, developing a love affair with Latin dance music and hooking up with a salsa band. You can get profound about these doings or just accept it as an obvious part of a musician's life. Along with the motorcycle driver and the marathon runner, these scenes might have been framed around the simple idea that symphony orchestra members need an artful break now and then, just a bit of, shall we say, bar relief.

The sequence in which Israeli born cellist Udi Bar-David teams up with Simon Shaheen, the Palestinian-born violinist and ud player, does not move us as it might have; it smacks too much of a gratuitous lesson in Apolitical Relations 101. And, though the scenes are attractive and the music-making quite winning, the street players doing Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* on the accordion and Bach "Badinerie" on tuned crystals (with ice-water) are designed to let us in on a not so secret big secret: classical musicians recognize talent wherever it lurks. Bravo!

So this is a tribute to the inside of a symphony orchestra, the cogs in the wheel, not the driver. Don't expect comments about the maestro. That's for another time. But the talk we get is revealing. This reviewer may never hear the opening bassoon solo of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* the same way again, not after a comment like, "It sounds like a wounded bird ... you can hear the pain." Musicians can get very specific about music like "Rite," which they talk about more than any other piece. It being followed immediately by a clip from a performance of Tan Dun's

Concerto for String Orchestra, in which a bass player is required to grunt and groan, and then a bit in which the composer makes exotic vocal sounds in his *Taoism*, gives us the excuse to review this film as acceptable grist for the contemporary music mill. (We should not overlook the fact that, though "Rite" will be 100 years old on 2013, it is still as modern as anything being written today, mainly because of its rhythmic energy and uncompromising dissonances.)

Yet the Philadelphians are still a classical orchestra in the pure sense of that word. David Kim may ask members to rise early and commune with nature while in Saratoga, to greet the day with the sounds and smells of "anticipation," and Oriental ideas are abundant because, like all orchestras today, the rosters are filled with players of Asian origin or derivation. But one feels we are hearing the real Schubert in his *Ninth Symphony* and, especially, his sumptuous *Cello Quintet*. Or Beethoven in his "Eroica" *Symphony* and noted overtures. Or Rimsky-Korsakov in *Scheherezade*. The same for Brahms' *First Symphony* which ends the film. But here a problem asserts itself; the director is not sure how to end it and gives us the title



Tan Dun—"exotic vocal sounds..."

crawl before the images and sounds of the work fade out leaving us to scratch our heads. What no bombastic finale? The "out" part of the title suffers from unclear direction and loose editing. But then, it's still a movie, not a concert.

We hope the film will serve a useful purpose and do what many critics are saying it was designed to do—inspire our youth. Yet even in a movie house in open-minded and culturally upbeat Greenwich Village, we could hear groans and complaints as we filed out. Call it "bah relief?" Humbug! What the Dickens should you expect? Well, certainly something better than "ech!"



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CHANGING COURSE

Our thanks to the readers and loyal supporters of *NMC* who have expressed concern over the lengthy hiatus between the Spring/ Summer and Fall/ Winter 2005 issues. Please be assured that *NMC* is quite alive and moving ahead with confidence and a sense of positive anticipation. There is still plenty of creative and purposeful activity going on in contemporary music, and the field needs a strong voice to survive and continue to speak for it. It still has many heroes that need to be honored via appropriate gestures, including our own New Music Champion award. This is a field that cries out for devoted followers, particularly motivated young writers on new music whose careers require carefully nurturing. We are very much attuned to that mission. So why the slowdown? Without delving into too many details we cite the cliché "when it rains it pours." As it happens, we were beset by computer problems, funding reductions, personal illness and family loss all around the same time.

But there is always that silver lining among the clouds, and we have come to realize that direction and underscoring, like those of an astute symphony conductor, need to be addressed. We, too, have composers to represent and an audience to reach. Though this issue is late—and remember that we are a chronicle, not a newsletter—there will be two more issues in 2006. They will not be quarterlies or double-ups as before. As noted atop our masthead, we are now adhering to a semi-annual schedule. The expected larger issue will strive for wider coverage, more seasoned viewpoints, and humor side by side with generally serious contents of lasting value, while information of a more timely nature will become the focus of our web site. (Be sure to read our full-page advertisement.) A fresh approach to our web site will be one of the by-products of our new magazine issuance policy, a much more realistic one in terms of timing and opportunity.

So please stay tuned. We need you to take advantage of us.

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In 2004 we presented our biennial New Music Champion award. We also honored another promising young new music critic, Mr. Zachary Lewis. You, too, may be eligible. If you are under 30 years of age at the time of the ceremony (planned for the Fall of 2006), then you or your sponsor, school or employer may submit evidence of outstanding writing with at least three samples published in a magazine, newspaper or newsletter. School papers are acceptable. They should be sent to our e-address. Samples will be evaluated by *NMC*'s Editorial Board on the basis of clarity of presentation, topicality, language, and sagacity. Your chances are best if you have covered contemporary music in your criticism. The winner of this competition receives a cash award of \$250 and a handsome plaque.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES remain \$18 for 4 issues (two years now), \$28 for 8, \$36 for 12. Add \$6 for every 4 issues beyond that. Overseas orders still require a fee for extra postage. Unbroken subscription renewals afford subscribers a bonus issue per sub year. More on the enclosed order form. Remember, you must be a paid subscriber to take advantage of the various benefits we offer to readers from announcements of your latest honors and achievements to eligibility to be considered for our biennial New Music Champion award.

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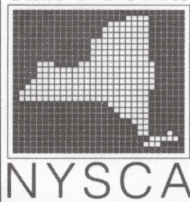
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Both this publication and its affiliate and conduit, Composers Concordance, are supported in part with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

New Music Connoisseur is also supported with interest and dividends through a personal fund of the publisher at a prestigious investment house comprised of bonds and equities. *NMC* receives donations from private individuals and revenue from subscribers and advertisers.

PUZZLE PAGE

"LYRICAL" ACROSTIC

You'll need to sharpen your pencils for this oversized acrostic. The usual clues related to serious contemporary music and classical music in general have been replaced by those of a different, though still "classical," genre. The focus is on the words to songs and the techniques used (including rhyming, sometimes as hints to solvers). Get the solution and you may be in the running for a bunch of free CDs. Good solving. (Deadline for submission is May 31, 2006; answers to last puzzle and winner spotlight on the next page.)

1 T	2 S	3 X	4 AA	5 Q		6 L	7 X	8 H	9 Q	10 C	11 S		12 D	13 M	14 S	15 Z	16 H	17 J	18 X		19 L	20 J	21 V	22 P		23 BB
24 A	25 R		26 P	27 S	28 T		29 J	30 S	31 BB	32 E	33 K		34 W	35 X	36 V		37 D		38 B	39 L	40 S	41 M	42 J	43 K		44 H
45 O	46 V	47 Y		48 U	49 J	50 L	51 F	52 T	53 X	54 D	55 S	56 I		57 Y	58 A	59 N		60 AA	61 K	62 J	63 F	64 T	65 G	66 X	67 L	
68 I	69 W		70 Z	71 Q	72 B	73 L	74 V	75 X	76 J	77 R		78 Y	79 BB	80 W	81 V	82 X	83 T		84 D	85 N	86 L	87 K	88 B	89 I	90 S	
91 S	92 O	93 N		94 G	95 Z	96 A	97 C	98 V	99 E		100 C	101 S	102 H	103 A	104 L	105 J	106 G	107 V	108 R	109 X	110 W	111 Q		112 AA	113 W	114 G
115 S	116 X	117 P	118 J	119 A	120 D	121 Q	122 L		123 I	124 T	125 Z	126 F	127 K		128 Q	129 R		130 AA	131 X	132 C		133 F	134 W	135 BB	136 I	
137 V	138 P	139 L	140 A	141 N		142 Y	143 A	144 M		145 C	146 F	147 N	148 T	149 Z	150 V		151 J	152 U		153 O	154 Q	155 Y	156 N	157 R		158 Z
159 C	160 L	161 AA	162 J	163 D		164 I	165 V	166 F		167 D	168 K	169 M		170 H	171 L	172 Y	173 K	174 W		175 N	176 F	177 D	178 E		179 Q	180 K
181 I	182 M	183 T	184 BB		185 L	186 N	187 E	188 V	189 S		190 A	191 O	192 Y		193 C	194 J	195 Y	196 X	197 D	198 H		199 L	200 B	201 Y	202 K	203 X
204 J	205 E		206 U	207 X		208 J	209 E	210 T	211 D	212 O	213 V	214 Q	215 S	216 G	217 L	218 A	219 AA	220 X	221 K							

A. It rhymes with "Smoke on your pipe and put that in" (from Word S)

103 58 24 143 119 96 140 190 218

B. Notation to a string player to use the bow

88 200 38 72

C. Conducted a type of fund-raiser using tickets

10 159 193 97 145 132 100

D. "Hot" cabaret where they battle nightly to keep the show girls' clothes on (3 words)

12 54 167 84 37 211 163 197 177 120

E. She sings "I'm as corny as Kansas in August..." and rhymes with Bocelli

205 178 187 99 32 209

F. How drill instructors bark commands, or Jimmy Durante sang

126 166 63 51 133 176 146

G. Police intrusions upon strip joints, perhaps

216 94 106 65 114

H. Irving Berlin classic

102 44 8 16 198 170

I. Cancel; a rhyme for lullaby?

89 123 136 181 68 164 56

J. What the Age of Aquarius brings to the mind in *Hair* (2 wds)

105 49 42 162 29 20 151 204 194 76 208 118 62 17

K. What Annie's "... just thinkin' about tomorrow clears away" (2 words)

202 168 221 33 180 61 173 127 87 43

L. It's "bright, golden" in Oklahoma (4 words)

39 73 160 6 50 139 19 171 86 185 122 104 67 217 199

M. Laurie's aunt in *Oklahoma*

169 13 182 144 41

N. How theater critics said Ethel Merman used her singing voice

175 147 186 93 59 156 85 141

O. Woody Allen's ____ Days

191 92 153 45 212

P. They're not very literate souls

138 26 117 22

Q. Set of values opposed to the written word

9 121 128 214 5 71 154 179 111

R. George M. Cohan, partly self-described

25 108 129 157 77

S. Show in which Tony sings "Say it loud and there's music playing..." (3 wds.)

91 14 27 55 90 2 11 215 189 115 40 101 30

T. Musical in which a rogues' gallery replaces composer's prior tribute to a pointillist

52 1 28 183 83 124 148 64 210

U. Librettist/lyricist Harburg's nickname

152 206 48

V. What looks can become "together," to Joanne in *Company*: a rhyme for "lewd"

137 81 213 107 165 46 150 21 36 98 188 74

W. Rolls out the flag; a rhyme for "twirls"

113 69 34 134 80 110 174

X. Sondheim song ending with the words, "Well, maybe next year" (4 words)

18 66 3 7 116 53 203 131 196 82 109 35 75 207 220

Y. "How do ____? Let me count the ways (3 words)"

201 78 172 155 192 142 57 47 195

Z. Like Scrooge or a cranky crustacean?

149 95 125 70 15 158

AA. Wretched, as poverty

60 161 112 219 4 130

BB. Lyricist Hart, informally

135 23 31 184 79

Jeff James, proprietor of JamesArts, remains the sponsor of this Puzzle Page. Try your hand and win your choice of CDs from the JamesArts catalog. Visit www.jamesarts.com or www.ClassicalCDs.net

NO STRANGER TO PUZZLES

Our congratulations to Elizabeth Austin for successfully solving our recent puzzle, "Electronic Interdependence," a find-the-words challenge yielding a brief message. Elizabeth commented to us afterward saying, "Thanks so much for this rewarding trivial pursuit!"

Trivial these puzzles may be, but our repeated observation that composers use notes instead of words to create musical riddles and enigmas may well have been illustrated by a piece of hers we heard at the ACA Festival of June 2004. After the performance of *An American Triptych*, I asked her if she had deliberately created an aural jigsaw puzzle with this fun music. Her verbal reply was non-committal, but with a wink in the I (if we may be allowed to speak in puzzleese). As you read her bio you will notice another clear suggestion of that tendency in the title of a composition she wrote. And this editor believes that his acceptance of Austin's music as pleasing to the ears is truly a function of positive enigmatological vibrations.

Born in Baltimore in 1938, Elizabeth R. Austin received her early musical training at The Peabody Conservatory. When Nadia Boulanger visited Goucher College (Towson, MD), where Elizabeth was an undergrad student, she awarded the composer a scholarship to study at the Conservatoire Americaine in Fontainebleau, France.

Elizabeth has taught composition and theory in Hartford, Connecticut. Her association

with the Hartt School (University of Hartford), where she earned a Master's while teaching, led to the establishment of a faculty/student exchange with the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Heidelberg-Mannheim. While studying for her Ph.D. at U. Conn, she won First Prize in the Lipscomb Electronic Music Competition for her *Klavier Double* for piano and tape.

Other awards: a Connecticut Commission on the Arts grant; selection by GEDOK (Society of Women Artists in German-speaking countries) to represent the Mannheim-Ludwigshafen region in the national 70th anniversary exhibit in Lübeck; first prize in IAWM's 1998 Miriam Gideon Competition, for *Homage for Hildegard* (von Bingen); a residency at Bellagio, Italy in 2001, via the Rockefeller Foundation.

Performed in Prague, Rome, Finland, Italy, and Germany, as well as The US and The Caribbean, Austin's music has been received with distinction and critical acclaim. This music was the subject of an interview with Bruce Duffie, *New Music Connoisseur*, Spring, 2003. She was selected to have her music featured on the ACA website in March, 2001. Her music has also been well received by radio audiences in Germany (Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk), and featured in the MDR Triangel. Ulrich Urban performed her *Puzzle Preludes for piano* at Leipzig's Gewandhaus in 2002. Recent premieres have taken place in three German cities, and in Nashville and Baltimore.

Dr. Austin and her husband, Prof. Gerhard Austin, promote internationally sponsored European cultural exchanges. Often called upon to translate scholarly papers and books. (Continuum Press has published *The Future of the*

Universe: Chance, Chaos, God? by Arnold Benz, translated by E. Austin.) Dr. Austin also acts as interpreter for German-speaking composers. She is President of Connecticut Composers, Inc. as well as organist/choir director at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Windham Center. She serves on the Alumni Board of The Walden School (young composers), New Hampshire.

Published by Arsis Press and Tonger Musikverlag and recorded on the Capstone and Leonarda labels, Elizabeth Austin is also represented on the 1994 Society of Composers CD and Journal (Vol. 20). Her scores are available through the American Composers Alliance. A book on her life and music, based on a doctoral dissertation (2000) by Dr. Michael Slayton, is in progress. In the *IAWM Journal*, Volume 7, 2001, her music is featured in an interview/article. Her piano music is cited in the *Internationales chronologisches Lexikon Klaviermusik* (Hollfelder). BLC

The Answers:

Solution to last issue's palindrome, Start to End: HAIR/AMELIA/HELLAS/EDESSA/TIME/DRAWER/PREVIN/IMAGE/MOTIF/NULLED/OPUS/TACET/TOLLED/AMANA/CRADLE/FORTE/MELODICA/LPS/TORTONI/TRAM...

End to Start: MARTINO/TROTS/PLACIDO/LEMETRO/FELD/ARCANA/MADEL/LOTTE/CATSUP/ODELL/UNFIT/OMEGA/MINIVER/PREWAR/DEMITASSE/DESALLE/HAILE/MARIAH. (Cryptogram answers on page 19. "Some witticisms...")



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* Indicates CD review



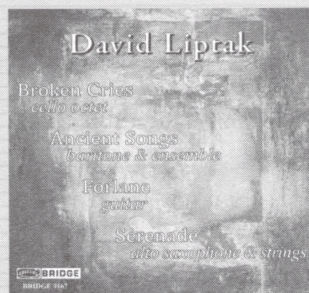
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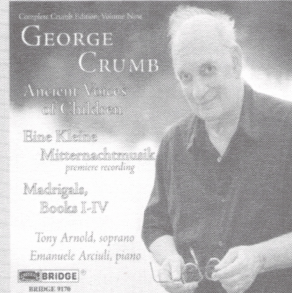
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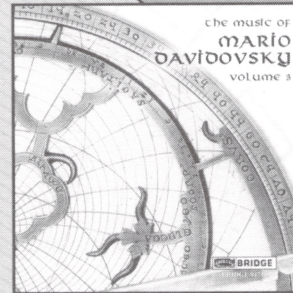
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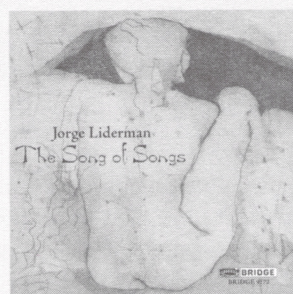
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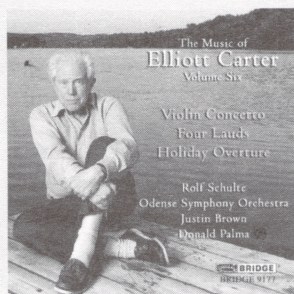


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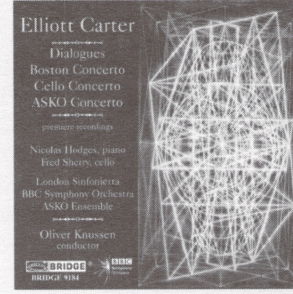


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